

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

GILBERT D. KULICK

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: This transcript was not edited by Mr. Kulick.]

Q: Today is January 29, 1993. This is an interview with retired Foreign Service Officer Gilbert D. Kulick, which is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I wonder if you could give me a bit about your background-where and when you were born, a little about your family and your growing up?

KULICK: Well, the reason that I knew today's date so readily is that it's three days after my birthday. I was born on January 26, 1942-the first month of the World War II era. I was born in Stamford, CT, and moved to Savannah, GA, at the age of four and a half. I did all my primary and high school education in Savannah, up to my senior year, when my family moved to San Antonio, TX.

Q: What was your family doing that caused this movement from Stamford to Savannah to San Antonio?

KULICK: My father was in Jewish communal service. He was the director of the Jewish Community Center in Savannah, a social service agency there. Then, during my senior year in high school, he took a better position in San Antonio. However, the circumstances of our moving to and living in the South were such that I never really considered myself a Southerner, despite the fact that I grew up entirely in the South. My parents always went to great lengths to try to counteract influences that I was exposed to in public schools. They always made a great point of sitting me down when I would come home [from school] and tell them about some racist comments that someone in my school might have made. They would point out to me that, "We don't believe these sorts of things." Curiously, this may have had something to do with the reason that I entered the Foreign Service because people in the Foreign Service tend to be a rather rootless bunch. I never really felt "rooted" where I grew up.

We moved to Texas. I went to the university there.

Q: Which university was it?

KULICK: The University of Texas in Austin. I moved again to California, to UCLA [University of California in Los Angeles]. So I had a series of educational experiences-it wasn't like being an Army "brat." I wasn't moving every two years, but, nevertheless, I had this more universalist approach...

Q: We belonged to the same era. I moved around. There was also World War II, which knocked an awful lot of people out of a normal life, at least that generation. What did you study at these universities?

KULICK: I did an "honors," liberal arts program. Here, again, it was a very generalized and unfocussed kind of approach to education. This was a program called "Plan II," which was an honors, liberal arts course at the University of Texas which enabled and even encouraged students not to specialize in a particular major program of studies. But to get a fairly broad and fairly deep, liberal education. I guess my studies concentrated on government and history but I really had no "major" as such. I just majored in liberal arts.

My junior year was spent at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. There I developed a very strong interest in Africa, because, curiously enough, there were several African students in the dormitory where I was living. They were medical students who were there under a WHO [World Health Organization] program at Hebrew University. In all, there were about 20 or 25 African students studying medicine. We became very friendly. I had always been interested in Africa from sort of a "naturalist" point of view. I was a great amateur of wild life. I think that, to most young Americans, that's the image we had. You know, Tarzan, the jungle, lions, gorillas, and so forth.

Q: Also, there were some travel films which came out-maybe that was a little earlier.

KULICK: Yes, by Osa Johnson. Those films came out in the 1930's, but I knew about them. She and her husband were intrepid explorers. We saw these pictures of them, standing on elephants-back when that was considered a "cool" thing to do.

Anyhow, I became friendly with a lot of these African students. At the end of my year of study [at Hebrew University] I planned a grand trip around Africa. A friend of mine and I were going to go down the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea on a fishing boat to Mombasa. Then we were going to get off and travel down to the Cape of Good Hope and go up the West Coast of Africa. I sat down and figured out that it would take a year to do it, when I really timed it out. I only had about six weeks available. So we scrapped the whole idea and went to Europe instead. But that's where my interest in Africa really began.

When I finished at the University of Texas, I decided to pursue an African studies program at UCLA. They didn't yet have a degree in this discipline, as such, but I enrolled in a Ph. D. program in political science, on the understanding that they would establish a degree program in African Studies. Indeed, they did, during my first year there. I hold the first M. A. degree in African Studies at UCLA-one of the great distinctions of my early career there.

At that point the Foreign Service began to look like a logical progression, although it was 1965 and it was not very fashionable...

Q: The Vietnam War was...

KULICK: For university students to be thinking about going to work for the government. I had a lot of reservations about it. I spent a year working for the U. S. National Students Association [NSA], while I kind of searched my soul to see whether I really wanted to "sell out" to Uncle Sam.

Q: For one thing, when you came into the Foreign Service-I'm not sure if it was right then, but it was about then-part of the contract was that if you entered, you might be sent to Vietnam. Or did that come a little later?

KULICK: It was a little bit later. It wasn't that kind of stipulation that inhibited me from taking up my appointment. It was just really a more general sense that I wasn't sure that I wanted to be identified with a government that was pursuing such a heinous policy in Southeast Asia, although the serious opposition to the war was just beginning. It wasn't really until 1966 that the opposition "took off." The irony, of course, was that it came out later that I was in some ways working for the CIA when I was at the NSA, because the Agency was underwriting a large part of the budget of the international operations of the NSA. I didn't know that at the time.

Q: I think that, to put it in perspective, it was a matter of conflicting groups of students...

KULICK: I had no problem with it when it all came out.

Q: But it was embarrassing...[Laughter]

KULICK: It started out much more benignly as a genuine recognition on the part of the U. S. Government that we needed to have a liberal student organization that could compete with the communist international student organizations, at a time when public support for liberal causes was...This was at the time of Senator McCarthy in 1948 or 1949. So the CIA clandestinely subsidized the organization [NSA], with no particular strings attached. There was a common, mutual interest in having that kind of group. As time went on, I think, the CIA became "greedy" and saw this not only as an independent force that could promote a broad, U. S. foreign policy goal but as a potential source of agents and intelligence. The reason that NSA decided to cut the tie [with the CIA] was that by that time they were feeling very much "dominated" by the Agency. But the whole thing went sour. Somebody blew the whistle, and the whole organization collapsed.

Anyhow, I spent a year as the NSA African students' "person." During my year at NSA my wife had a baby. We were living on \$4,000 a year. I figured that the State Department FSO-8 entrance salary of \$8,000 a year was very good.

Q: Could you give us a little bit about when you were at the university and at the NSA? What did the group around you feel about Africa? This is all very general, but this was the period when decolonization was well under way in most places, though there were some places where it hadn't started.

KULICK: Remember that I was in an African Studies program, so my friends were not an average cross-section of American students. They were Africans, with a very intense interest in Africa. The feeling was a very buoyant one. This was 1963-three years after the great wave of independence in West Africa. Kenya was soon to get independence and Tanzania had just become independent. The view was a very optimistic one. Africa was kind of the "wave of the future." The African countries were going to avoid all of the mistakes that, say, Latin America had made-all of the corruption and the military dictatorships. After all, they were coming to power in the 1960's, during the era of the great "enlightenment." The colonial powers had gone to great lengths to try to prepare them for democracy, establishing parliaments and all that sort of thing. Of course, it also coincided with the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. I think that, for most of us, this was looked upon as kind of an extension of our commitment to the Civil Rights Movement in the U. S.

There was no such thing as a conservative Africanist. I never met one. I heard about a guy named Smith Hempstone, who wrote books with sort of a conservative view of Africa. But interest in Africa was virtually synonymous with liberal politics on the [U. S.] domestic side. It was a very optimistic, idealistic view of Africa. Since then the pendulum has swung much further back toward a more cynical, pessimistic view on the part of a lot of people. But in those days...

Q: Even in the State Department, too, there was the view that Africa was the area where opportunity was to be found. This was even earlier. There was the view that one should "get in on the ground floor" in this interesting area and that you would be doing something, rather than holding hands with Swiss bankers.

KULICK: That's right. We felt that we were really going to be making a contribution toward the building of a democratic society and nation building.

Q: Then you came into the Foreign Service in...

KULICK: August, 1966.

Q: What did you first do?

KULICK: The first thing I did was join the A-100 course. The A-100 course was the basic training course for officers newly inducted into the Foreign Service. Most of the members of my class were around my age. In fact, I was, to the month, the average age of that class. We spent, I guess, about three months learning all the basic, diplomatic skills, or at least being exposed to them. I can hardly say that we "learned" them. There were courses in consular work, at which we were all expected to put in a couple of years. We had basic U. S. diplomatic history, a "soupcon" of economics, but very little, really. It's funny, but it's hard for me to reconstruct how we spent those 12 or 14 weeks, but they were very intense. We had a fair amount of "hands on" meetings with people in the Department in the various geographic and functional bureaus, getting a sense of what the real work of the Foreign Service was, as opposed to more theoretical kinds of classroom instruction. On the last day of the course there was a dramatic ceremony where we all assembled in our room and were told our fates for the next two years-very different from today, where you spend a lot of time "negotiating" your assignments.

I don't know. Are junior, first tour officers still able to negotiate assignments?

Q: I really don't know. I tend to assume "not much." I imagine that they can ask for a given assignment.

KULICK: Well, we were asked, and I knew that I wanted to go to Africa. I had looked and found out where the vacancies for junior officers were. I stated my preferences accordingly. Mogadishu was not on the list-not on my list, anyway, but that's where I was assigned.

Q: What was your reaction to it?

KULICK: My reaction was, "Oh, God, how am I going to tell my wife?" I thought that she was going to fall into a pit of depression. I had been "bidding" on what was then Leopoldville [now Kinshasa, Zaire]. That was the place where I really wanted to go, because, to me, that was the essence of Africa. I think that my second choice was Dakar [Senegal]. We were very young. I was 24, and she was 20. At that point we had a five-month old baby. She had been a fairly good sport about the idea of going to Africa, but when I said, "Mogadishu," she said, "What's that? I never heard of it." I went and got the post reports and, like all post reports, it was highly inflated in some respects. You know the art of writing post reports. [Sound of police sirens getting louder.]

Q: Let's suspend this for a bit. [A short break ensued.] For the transcriber, the police decided that we weren't guilty. You were talking about the art of the post report. Could you explain the rationale between writing some of these post reports which sometimes...

KULICK: Perhaps I should explain what a "post report" is. Every Foreign Service post has a document called the "post report." It is intended to acquaint newly-assigned people with living conditions in that post. It has segments on local history, politics, and culture, but the real essence is a description of living conditions at the post-housing, local transportation, shopping (a very important element), recreation, and schooling, as education is very important. To some extent, the "post report" has an influence on whether the post qualifies for a "hardship" allowance, although the people who make those determinations don't really work on the post report. They go out and supposedly look at the place quite closely from time to time. But mostly the decision on a hardship allowance is based on the post's description of itself. That's why, sometimes, you get these very exaggerated...

Q: You don't want to make it sound too nice.

KULICK: But on the other hand if you make it sound too terrible, nobody will go there. [Laughter] So, anyhow, we looked at the pretty pictures of the beach club, the local street life, and so forth. She managed to overcome her fear long enough to get our household goods-our very, very sparse household goods at that time-packed up and put on the plane. We had been married about a year.

We arrived in Mogadishu about a week before Christmas, 1966. I'll never forget getting off the plane, wearing our winter coats which we had worn on the trip over. We were hit by this blast of humid, 95 degree, Indian Ocean weather. It was quite a shock, although there was no reason to have been shocked. We certainly knew that we weren't going to a temperate climate. But that first blast of heat which you get when you get off the plane is very different from all of the descriptions. It is much more vivid and real than all the descriptions. Mogadishu Airport at that point was kind of a decrepit collection of old Italian Army barracks. Any illusions that might have been built up by looking at the pretty pictures in the post report were very quickly dispelled. I don't know how detailed you want to make this, but it was, in fact, a very quiet, sleepy, out of the way place-not on the main route to anywhere, either politically or logistically. For me, at least, it proved to be a tremendously interesting experience.

Like all Junior Officer Trainees (JOT's, we were called), my assignment was broken up into three or four month segments in the various sections of the Embassy, or the Mission, actually. I spent my first three or four months working for AID [Agency for International Development]. The idea was to expose you to all aspects of Foreign Service work since, at that stage in the ever changing philosophy of training for junior officers, we were not slotted into any particular, professional "stream." That was not to come until after the end of the first or second tour of duty. But, of course, I knew that I wanted to be a political officer and I took all of this other stuff as kind of recreational or enriching activities. But this didn't change my view as to what I wanted to do.

Somalia was a unique country in Africa, in many ways. Unlike any other country in Africa it had pretty much of a homogeneous population, at least from the linguistic and religious point of view. It was also fairly homogeneous from an ethnic point of view, although there were some differences between the so-called Hamitic, nomadic peoples of the North and the more settled, agricultural people of the South who were of more conventional, African stock. There was a lot of prejudice by the Hamitic northerners against the so-called "Bantu" people [of the South]. They really weren't really "Bantus." That's a linguistic term. They were "black Africans." But they were all Somalis. They all spoke Somali. There was no real, essential cultural difference between them. They had a rough and ready kind of democracy. They had a parliament, real elections, and real debate. Indeed, there was actually a political change in the government while I was there-not a change of party. One prime minister left and another one was voted in. The next time that there was a peaceful change of government in Africa was in Zambia in 1991.

The Somalis prided themselves-and we in the Embassy reflected that-on the perception that Somalia was a real democracy and that it was going to avoid all of the tribalism, corruption, and other blemishes on democracy that were already apparent in the modern history of other countries of Africa. These shortcomings were beginning to show up. The Nigerian civil war was about to begin-indeed, had already taken place at that point. Zaire-then the Congo-was already falling apart and is again falling apart. But Somalia seemed to have the necessary elements to make it. This is now 1993. As we have seen, this was an illusion.

Q: We now have U. S. troops, along with those from other members of the United Nations, trying to keep Somalia together.

KULICK: Perhaps better said, "trying to put Somalia back together," as the country has almost totally disintegrated.

Q: As you were saying, there is this view within the Foreign Service that, when you are assigned to a country, you like to think that it is kind of a "winner."

KULICK: Yes.

Q: And Somalia seemed to be a "winner."

KULICK: Well, it certainly seemed so at the time. I must say, in very idiosyncratic terms. It was not a place that anybody held up as a paragon of the way Africa should be, simply because it was different. They spoke Italian there. Where else in Africa except for Eritrea did people speak Italian? So it didn't fit into the conventional mode that we have of being a part of British or French or Portuguese colonial history. The Somalis were still a little bit ambivalent about whether they were Africans. To an American they looked like Africans, like other Africans. But those who know the region can very readily recognize a Somali Arab, even from a highland Ethiopian, much less by comparison with so-called "Negro" Africans from the southern and western part of the continent. They were all Muslims-not terribly devout, on the whole. But they had kind of a schizophrenic picture of themselves, betwixt and between the Arab world and Africa.

I found them thoroughly engaging people. They were very irreverent and very democratic, in the sense that they did not have much regard for hierarchical rank or for pretensions among politicians. There were no real social classes. That was characteristic of a nomadic society. Everyone in Somalia has a nickname because two-thirds of the people in the country are named either Mohammed or Ali or Achmad. So they have to have some other way of distinguishing among themselves. They tended to single out physical characteristics or personality characteristics, usually very negative ones. You might have a politician whose name was "Zuppo," for example, which I think means "lame" in Italian, because he dragged one leg. If a man had a broad nose, they'd call him "Flat Nose" or "Cross Eyes" or "Big Mouth." In fact, Siad Barre, who, at the time I was there, was the Army commander. In 1969 he led a coup d'etat and, for the next 22 years, was the military dictator of Somalia. He was universally known among Somalis as "Aphuain", which means "Big Mouth." That's what they called him. I don't know whether it referred to his loquacity or just that he happened to have a large, oral aperture. To an American this was a kind of appealing, national personality characteristic.

I used to contrast this with the situation in Ethiopia, which was very different. The Ethiopians are very formal, very proper, very deferential, and very polite and soft-spoken-extremely conscious of social class. They are very-what's the word? "Devious" sounds too sinister but they are very convoluted in their speech. You had to read between the lines to understand what they were saying. By contrast, the Somalis were very straightforward. They told you exactly what they thought. I mentioned Ethiopia because that was my next assignment.

I was the junior officer in the Embassy [in Mogadishu] and I did a little bit of everything. As the youngest officer they tried to get me to follow student affairs, although there was no university, and it was a little hard to do that. However, I used the fact that I had worked for the National Students Association, which at that time was still known among African students as a very liberal force in the United States, as a way of kind of ingratiating myself with young people. This was on the somewhat naive assumption that they knew or cared anything about American politics or that they made those kinds of distinctions. I experienced a period of near panic in February, 1967, when I was listening to the Voice of America one morning, over my cornflakes. I heard the announcer state that the National Students Association had revealed that for the previous 20 or 25 years it had been subsidized by the Central Intelligence Agency. Of course, this caused a great brouhaha back in the U. S. for days, because it turned out to be the kind of loose thread that, when pulled, unraveled the whole skein of other ventures by the Agency. It turned out that they were subsidizing labor unions and youth and cultural organizations. They had this whole, elaborate series of international operations that they were secretly funding. It was not all as malign as it was made out to be. In a lot of areas it was simply providing funding that was not available from private sources for organizations which they felt would assist us in our world-wide cultural and political confrontation with the Soviets. It created a great scandal in the U. S.

Anyhow, it turned out that, just as I had exaggerated the effect of my having played this up before, the Somalis seemed equally indifferent to the fact, later on, that it had all turned out to be an elaborate CIA operation. But that was a moment of real fright for me during the first three months of my diplomatic career.

Q: What was the feeling at that time about the "Soviet threat," because this was a theme that ran through an awful lot of our African policy. In Somalia from 1966-68, when you were there, how did people view the Soviets?

KULICK: The Somalis were playing the East-West game very actively. This was, perhaps, epitomized by the fact that the Somali Army was receiving training from the Soviets, while the National Police force was under the tutelage of what was then West Germany [the Federal Republic of Germany]. We used to joke about what would happen when the confrontation came. Would "our" police be able to whip "their" army? The Somalis didn't take any of this very seriously, on an ideological level. They simply saw this situation as a way of maximizing their bargaining position to obtain aid.

We had quite a sizeable AID mission then. I think that there were probably 30 or 35 Americans. I don't remember what the dollar amount of the aid was, but it was not insignificant. We had a large agricultural training program in a town called Afgoy outside Mogadishu, we contributed to the police training program, and there was a certain amount of public works assistance.

The Russians had a larger presence there because of their role in training the military. I should say not only the Russians, but the Chinese. I don't think that there were North Koreans there, but there was a large Chinese contingent handling grass roots projects. They built an assembly hall, a convention hall where all national rallies took place. Of course, in 1967-68 China was still totally off limits to the United States. We were not supposed to have anything to do with the Chinese there. This was still when we were fighting a rear guard action to keep Communist China out of the United Nations, when they were seen as the "Yellow Peril." I should say that this was before the Chinese Communists abandoned any real effort to proselytize or fight the Cold War. They were out there competing, both against us and against the Soviets.

There was a funny little vignette here. Every two years there was a major trade fair in Mogadishu. All of the countries with which Somalia had diplomatic relations had pavilions there, displayed their wares, and had cultural displays and so forth. As it turned out, the American Pavilion was right in the center of the fairgrounds, directly facing, nose to nose, the Chinese Pavilion. They were about 20 yards apart. American Embassy officers were assigned, on a rotation basis, to work in the American Pavilion as resource people, as guides through the exposition, and so forth. I had the duty one evening-it was very quiet and there were very few people in the pavilion. I was standing at the entrance to the pavilion, looking across this open area or parade ground at the Chinese Pavilion. You could look through the entrance and see a statue of Mao Zedong, about eight feet high, brilliantly lit, with a crimson background behind it. It was very alluring to me. I was really fascinated and drawn to see what was going on in there. When my relief arrived at the American Pavilion, I very casually strolled across this open ground and went into the Chinese Pavilion. I walked around, looking at the various exhibits. It was like tasting forbidden fruit-a 16 year old kid going into a burlesque house. [Laughter] That was the feeling I had, a very exotic, tantalizing taste of the unknown. I walked around, viewing the various exhibits.

As I neared the entrance, there was a table piled high with copies of Mao's "Little Red Book," the sayings of Chairman Mao. Even at the time these were kind of banal cliches with which Mao exhorted his people. But in 1967 Mao was at the zenith of his power and had the entire 600 million Chinese in his thrall, memorizing his thoughts. Actually, it was called, "The Thoughts of Chairman Mao." The sayings were rather pretentious. Anyhow, I thought what a gas it would be to pick up one of these books and have it around my office. I reached out to take a copy of the book. I felt this hand come down and stop me. I turned around, and there was a Chinese guy. He looked at me and said, "Where are you from?" I guess that they had orders just like us, to stay away from the Americans. I looked up and said, "Oh, I'm from Egypt." He said, "Oh, all right. I thought that you were an American." I said, "No, no, my name is Mustafa. I'm from the Egyptian Embassy." This was the first name I came up with. So we got into a conversation. I was sweating bullets. You sweat there even when you're not nervous. I managed to persuade the guy, although in retrospect I don't know how that was possible. Mogadishu was a small town and people knew each other. But I think that this guy was not from the Chinese Embassy. He was from Beijing, or Peking, as it was known then.

Anyhow, the amusing part of the story is that, as I worked my way out of that and left the Chinese Pavilion, a young Somali came up to me and started speaking to me in Arabic. Well, I don't know Arabic but I recognized the language. It was clear that he had overheard me, thought I was Egyptian, and wanted to practice his Arabic on me. I must say, I was much more quick-witted in those days than I am now. I very quickly said to him, in Somali, "Oh, please, since I'm in your country, I would rather speak Somali. I am learning your language. I can speak my language any time." I'd been studying Somali. But he persisted in wanting to speak Arabic. I said, "No, no, we must speak Somali." I managed to extricate myself after I had this brief, painful conversation in Somali. During the rest of the time I was in Mogadishu, I kept running into this guy on the street. He would call out to me, "Mustafa, Mustafa." I was deathly afraid that he would see me one day walking with the DCM or someone from the Embassy and have to explain. But my luck held, and it never happened. As the attentive listener will begin to perceive, I was a rather brash young Foreign Service Officer.

Q: But this, of course, is some of the fun of the Foreign Service. You're allowed to be brash in a lot of places.

KULICK: We had a very traditional Ambassador and DCM, and I don't think that they would have appreciated these antics if they had known about them at all.

Q: Could you talk a little about your first Ambassador and DCM and how you got along with them. This was your first Embassy. How was it run? The Ambassador was Raymond Thurston.

KULICK: The Ambassador was Raymond Thurston. I'm not sure how old he was at that time. He was completely white-haired, though, and very distinguished looking. He loved to have people tell him that he looked like Spencer Tracy, which, in fact, he did, to some extent. He was a fairly superficial person, I think. Well, I won't get into personalities too much. I lived right next door to the DCM. He was a fairly dour, relatively humorless person. He's still living around Washington, so I won't give you his name. Ambassador Thurston has since died. I think that they saw me as kind of brash and in need of some seasoning, fairly quickly, which is why they gave me these lousy jobs to do. As I mentioned, my first assignment was in AID for three months. The job involved basically collating statistics of one sort or other. Then I came over to work in the Economic Section of the Embassy for another three months, doing WTDR's (World Trade Directory Reports), which are sort of real "scut work" in an Embassy. People [in the U. S.] would be interested in importing from some company or exporting to it and would inquire of the State Department about the company. We would go out and do a report on the bona fides of the company. But in retrospect all of this looks much more interesting and useful than it appeared at the time. I wanted to be a political officer, I wanted to start doing political work right away.

I was so young and I looked even younger, so people often took me for a Peace Corps Volunteer. In fact, I felt much more at home with the Peace Corps Volunteers than I did with other Embassy officers. But the Peace Corps Volunteers were instructed not to hang around with Embassy people for the opposite reasons. They didn't want any confusion among Somalis and wanted to make sure that the Somalis understood that the Peace Corps didn't work for the Embassy and therefore the Peace Corps Volunteers were not Embassy "agents." They were agents of the U. S. Government but they weren't there to gather intelligence.

Then I did a six-month stint as consular officer, which, as it turned out, was probably the most interesting work I did while I was there. This was because, at a small post, one consular officer did everything-visa work, citizenship, and passports. In addition to that I had the rather grandiloquent title of "Officer in Charge of British Interests," because the U. S. was the "protecting power" for the U. K. [United Kingdom] in Somalia at that time. This arrangement was made about in 1964, after Somalia broke diplomatic relations with the U. K. The British, for reasons which no one has ever explained to me, had held a referendum in the northeastern province or Northern Frontier District of Kenya, as a part of preparing that country for independence. About 80 or 85% of the population of this area was composed of ethnic Somalis. The referendum was held there to see whether [the people wanted to be part of Kenya]. Somalia already claimed all of the Somali speaking areas adjacent to it. To no one's surprise the people voted overwhelmingly in favor of separating from Kenya and joining Somalia. Whereupon the British said, in effect, "Thank you very much. Kenya will get its independence in December, 1964, and the area in question will be part of Kenya." Not surprisingly, the Somalis took great exception to this. Some day I've got to find out why the British did this, because obviously they had no intention of honoring the wishes of the [Somali-speaking] residents [of the Northern Frontier District]. Anyhow, at that point the Somalis broke diplomatic relations with the British, and the U. S. became the protecting power.

This meant that we took over protection of the welfare of British subjects and British Protected Persons, as well as the properties of the British Mission there. So, this meant for me that I got the British Ambassador's Land Rover, complete with his driver, who picked me up at home every morning. I was probably the only junior officer in all of Africa who had his own car and driver. I also "liberated" the piano from the British Ambassador's residence, which was going to rack and ruin there in the tropical heat. I had it moved for safekeeping to my living room. There was a British War Graves Cemetery and a British Council Library filled with termite bait. We finally liquidated the library because it was being consumed by termites. Substantively, this additional assignment meant that I handled all of Britain's consular interests throughout Somalia. I guess the Embassy also handled British political interests, but this was done at a higher, political level.

I had all sorts of interesting cases: shipwrecked sailors from the Maldiv Islands who washed up on the beach in Somalia and had to be repatriated to the Maldives. Temporarily, we set up a tent camp for them. This was particularly memorable. In fact, I've just written it up for THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL. It will be in the next issue coming out next week. I'm not sure how much this...

Q: I think that this is very important to give us an idea of what we were doing [in Somalia at that time].

KULICK: One Friday, I think, which was our day off-the Muslim Sabbath-I was down at our beach club, which is where we all went when we had any free time. There was, in fact, a great deal of free time because the Embassy only worked from 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM-we had the rest of the day off. I got a call from the Embassy Duty Officer saying that they had had a call from the Police or someone who reported that a British ship had been caught, violating Somali territorial waters, and had been brought into the port of Mogadishu under guard. The captain of the ship was demanding to see his consul-and that was me.

So I went down to the port to the port captain's office. There, sitting before me, was the commander of the Somali Army, Gen Mohammed Siad Barre, the commander of the Somali Navy, and the captain of the port. They were grilling this hapless, British captain, who had been on his way to Aden with a cargo of potatoes for the then British garrison there. Aden was the site of a considerable guerrilla war, with the British garrison trying to control the unrest. The British left Aden a couple of years later, but it was a major problem at the time. The ship's cargo of potatoes was a major part of British Army rations at the time, I gather. The Somalis were convinced that this British ship was the advance guard of the long-anticipated British invasion of Somalia. Describing the Somalis as ethnocentric and xenophobic greatly understates their obsession with their own importance. They were absolutely convinced that there were British submarines offshore, ready to send waves of Marines onto the beaches. Why they thought that a potato-carrying ship would be the vanguard of such a force, I don't know. The British ship captain just wanted to get out of Somalia and continue on his way to Aden. Over a two-day period they grilled the captain. I don't mean that they tortured him, but they kept trying to get information out of him. I was valiantly trying to play the role of a diplomat or consul and to convince them that there was nothing sinister in all of that. He had just happened to get too close to shore. He said that, in fact, he had not been in their territorial waters. The upshot of this affair was that, over a two-day period the cargo on the ship deteriorated very rapidly in the baking, tropical sun. When they finally decided to let the ship go, the captain said that the cargo had deteriorated too far and would never make it to Aden in edible condition, so they dumped all of the potatoes on the quay in the port of Mogadishu.

It turned out, quite by coincidence, that there had been a shortage of potatoes on the local market for the preceding two months. They didn't grow potatoes in Somalia, and the whole supply depended on a ship that came from Italy every two months. The total supply was not very large, because it was mostly expatriates who ate potatoes, not Somalis. On the local expatriate cocktail circuit, that was the subject of minor grumbling. We had pasta but no potatoes. When the word got out that there was a load of potatoes which had just been dumped in the port, every houseboy and market woman in town descended on the port and scooped up the potatoes. For the next week all of us expatriates gorged ourselves on potatoes, because they had to be eaten fairly quickly. The potatoes were just about rotten. I call that "The Great Mogadishu Potato Caper." This affair is illustrative of the level of pettiness that diplomatic or consular work in out of the way, provincial places like that can entail. We didn't have any really major issues with the Somalis.

Q: Oh, there was the Mau-Mau issue and the Ogaden question.

KULICK: No, the situation was pretty quiet. [Emperor] Haile Selassie was still well entrenched on his throne [in Ethiopia]. There were little border skirmishes from time to time, and, of course, the Somalis had asserted their claim, not only to the Ogaden area but to the northern frontier area of Kenya, which I referred to before, and to Djibouti as well, which was then known as French Somaliland. In fact, the five points on the star at the center of the Somali flag were said to represent the five segments of the Somali homeland, which had been divided up. There were the three that I just mentioned [The Ogaden, the northern frontier area of Kenya, and Djibouti], plus Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland, which were merged together in 1960 when Somalia became an independent country. Written right into their constitution was the goal of reuniting into one country the five territories represented on the star. But they were in no position to press their claims because they were much weaker, militarily, than Ethiopia-or even Kenya. At that point the Somali Army only had about 8,000 troops. It was quite small-a far cry from the 100,000 man Army they ended up with after having successfully manipulated the Americans and the Russians into arming them to the teeth. But when I was there, the Somalis were no real threat. We had no particularly controversial matters at issue between us. Our Embassy in Mogadishu, I suspect, was typical of the way most American Embassies functioned in Africa at that time. We were concentrating on helping them with economic development and keeping an eye on the Russians and the Chinese, trying to make sure that they didn't get the upper hand.

The Somalis had no ideological affinity with the Russians or the Chinese at all. They were much too anarchic to be attracted to a centralized, political philosophy. They seemed to have a kind of indigenous, democratic tradition. We felt fairly good about the situation, even though the Russians were supplying the Army. In Cold War terms we were certainly at least even with the Soviets. Where it really counted, in the hearts and minds of the people, we were in a stronger position.

I guess that the only real political strain-and it was significant-occurred over the 1967 Middle East War, which took place about six months after I arrived there.

Q: The 1967 War was between...

KULICK: The June, 1967, War...

Q: Israel, Syria, and Egypt.

KULICK: Even if people look at this tape 50 years from now, I'm sure that they will recognize that event. That was the major conflict which occurred when Israel took on three Arab countries [Egypt, Syria, and Jordan], thoroughly defeated them all, and conquered the Sinai area, the West Bank [of the Jordan], the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. The Somalis were not, at that point, members of the Arab League. They formally joined the League several years later. However, it was a 100% Muslim country, right on the periphery of the Middle East. It had very strong pro-Arab and anti-Israeli feelings. When the [1967] War broke out, there were several demonstrations-I think that they were fairly spontaneous-against the American Embassy, because we were seen as Israel's great protector, although we had not intervened [in the fighting] at all. It was all over before we ever had a chance or there was any need to intervene. But for a period of six or seven days we were fairly worried. If the war had gone on for much longer, this anti-Israel sentiment could well have jeopardized the American Embassy. We were "locked down" during that time. We were told to stay home and not move around town. I remember one demonstration-again, typical of the kind of "Mickey Mouse" quality of the place. In Syria they burned down and ransacked the Consulate. In Somalia the demonstrators were throwing rubber "Zoris" at the American Embassy.

Q: A "Zori" is a...?

KULICK: Thonged rubber sandals that everybody wore. That suggests the virulence with which they demonstrated. In short, it wasn't very serious. They were just going through the motions, I think. But in fact the government felt the need to make some kind of demonstration of loyalty to the Arab cause. In the Friday edition [equivalent of a Sunday edition in the U. S.] of the local, weekly English language paper there was a headline across the top of the [front] page that said, "Somalia to Send Troods to War." The headline said "Troods" instead of "Troops." This was in large type, I might add-I'm holding my fingers about 2 ½ inches apart. That, to me, captured the essence of the place. They huffed and puffed and came out with these ludicrous kinds of pronouncements. Fortunately, the war was over before they could get their "troods" launched. They were going to send some sort of token force, but the Israelis spared them the need to do that.

I recall that one person in the expatriate, American community was actually an unmarried Jewish man from Aden who had lived in Somalia for many years. He ran the Mobil Oil operation there. I'd gotten to know him. I guess that I hadn't publicized the fact that I'd lived in Israel for a year and spoke Hebrew and so forth. I remember Max getting in touch with me and asking me whether, if the balloon went up, we would take care of him. He was widely assumed to be an Israeli spy-and probably was. We were listening to short wave radio broadcasts from Israel, following the course of the war, on a day by day basis. At the beginning, of course...

Q: It looked bad.

KULICK: It looked very bad. Here were the huge Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian Armies poised on the borders of Israel, ready to attack. But within 48 hours, as we listened to foreign broadcasts, things changed. The Somali Radio, of course, was picking up broadcasts out of Cairo, which were still talking about glorious, Egyptian victories.

Q: They were also talking about American airplanes [allegedly] attacking [Egyptian aircraft], which was a complete fabrication.

KULICK: It was a very tense period for three or four days. I remember wondering if we were going to have to be evacuated, because, of course, all of our Missions in the Arab world were shut down. Suddenly, there was a great glut of State Department Arabists on the [jobs] market [in the Foreign Service]. For years thereafter there were Arabists walking the halls [of the State Department]. I don't remember the figure, but we had 10 or 12 Embassies closed down. In fact, one of the evacuees came to Mogadishu. I don't remember what they gave him to do. There wasn't that much work to do, but [the Department] had to find places for these people. That [the 1967 War] put a strain on our relations with the Somalis for a while. But, again, they were pretty cynical about the Arabs. They knew that the Arabs really didn't give a damn about them. Their emotional commitment to the Arab cause was fairly superficial, I think. Nevertheless, the spectacle of Israel conquering all of this Arab territory and humiliating these Arab states did arouse a certain amount of passion among the [Somali] political class. However, this passed fairly quickly. I don't remember there being any long term consequences of the war.

On the whole, though, it [my assignment to Somalia] was a very tranquil period. It was a good place "to learn the ropes," because I was able to take it all in in a fairly leisurely kind of way.

Q: You came back to Washington for, what was it, about a year -1968-69?

KULICK: It was for 10 months of training.

Q: What were you taking?

KULICK: I was studying Amharic. Before my tour in Somalia concluded, I was assigned to the Embassy in Addis Ababa, in a language designated position which required a year of Amharic training before I went. I was delighted. To me, Ethiopia was the "big time" for an Africanist. It was the headquarters of the OAU and the oldest African country.

Q: The OAU is the Organization of African Unity.

KULICK: I suspect that it may not really be so united. I was quite pleased with the assignment. It was considered a "plum" for an Africanist. It meant coming back to Washington for a fairly short time, which my wife wasn't terribly happy about. That's a motif that was repeated throughout my Foreign Service career, because I had told her that as a reward for sweating it out in Somalia for a couple of years I would get us an assignment in Rome or Europe or someplace like that. Why I thought I could make such a promise, I don't know. I guess that what I meant was that I would try. She heard the commitment and held me to it. As it turned out, she loved Ethiopia and had a wonderful time there. There were no long-term recriminations about it, except for the fact that I hadn't consulted her properly. That, in itself, was a black mark on my record. I was in Washington for about nine months. The course was for 10 months. I left after about eight and one-half months because I was anxious to get out to the post. There is only so much language that you can learn in a classroom.

Q: After about six or seven months you reach that plateau where you aren't adding anything. You might as well get to the post.

KULICK: I was lucky. There were only two people in the class, and the teacher was excellent. I have a lot of linguistic aptitude. I had gotten myself up to a level of 2 or 2+ in Somali, just studying with a local teacher. There was no FSI program and no course material. I sort of made it all up. I've subsequently forgotten Somali completely, but it was fun learning the language. It was always delightful to surprise Somalis with my ability to speak their language a little. Of course, in one case it justified [the effort]. It saved my neck!

We went out to Ethiopia in the summer of 1969. We were there for three years. I was the junior political officer.

Q: What was the situation in Ethiopia in 1969-1970?

KULICK: Historians would call it a "fin de regime" period. In retrospect it was clearly the tail end of the Haile Selassie era. We were pretty conscious of that. But as we were saying earlier, people were thinking that they were at the end of the regime for a dozen years—at least since 1960 when there had been a coup against Haile Selassie when he was out of the country. The United States, in effect, helped him reverse the coup. We brought him back from Brazil where he'd been on a state visit. We didn't intervene militarily but we made it clear that he had our full backing. We brought him back, reinstalled him in Addis Ababa, and the coup collapsed. From 1960 on that was all borrowed time. He didn't use it very well. The whole thrust of our policy toward Ethiopia during that period was ostensibly, at least, pushing the emperor to prepare for the transition, to prepare for the next generation, to encourage democratic forces, to bring in new leadership, to prepare the country for a much more open, democratic system after he left power.

As Secretary of the Treasury Bentsen might say, his son was no Haile Selassie. He was a very weak sort of character. Most people thought that he would be a figurehead, and the question was, who would be the real power in the country? Unlike Somalia, we had what we considered to be important, strategic interests in Ethiopia. Not just because of its position at the entrance to the Red Sea, it was one of the largest, most prestigious countries in Africa. It was also the location of a major military communications relay station.

Q: Kagnew Station.

KULICK: Kagnew Station. We pronounced it "Kagnew Kanyo". Kagnew Station, in Asmara, which we had operated since the end of World War II. The Italians had been expelled from there in the early 1940's. The British operated [the station] at first, and then they turned it over to us. Our military swore that it was an absolutely critical link in our global communications chain. I think that it was a large, NSA type of operation. Q: You mean the National Security Agency, which is essentially listening to...

KULICK: Electronic communications...

Q: Eavesdropping...

KULICK: Yes. But it was also used in the early years of satellite communications. There were satellite relay stations. I never really knew exactly what went on there, but the [U. S.] military insisted that it was utterly indispensable and that our policy could do nothing that would jeopardize our presence at Kagnew Station. Well, as has happened far, far too frequently in American history, our fixation on that kind of thing in many ways contributed to our loss of it, by completely or largely depriving our policy of a balance and perspective that it might have had, had we not been held hostage to [Kagnew Station]. That experience gave me a perspective which I have seen repeated over and over in my years [in the Foreign Service]. The United States, for all its clear superiority, militarily and economically, and its role as a super power-somehow we have often felt hostage to these small countries and have felt somehow that we needed them more than they needed us. I never quite figured out why it is that a country that can dominate the world, as we did, is often so deferential to these little countries because they have a communications station or they have an...

Q: Airfield?

KULICK: Airfield or something that we regarded as indispensable, when clearly, it seemed to me then, and still seems to me, they needed us more than we needed them. We were in a far more advantageous position than we gave ourselves credit for. I don't mean that we should have used [these facilities] to abuse these countries. We should have used them in ways that actually would have served their interests by encouraging democratization or greater openness. I guess the Shah [of Iran] was the most egregious example of that sort of thing, where [that kind of] policy went sour. Here we had a figure considered so critical to our interests in the Middle East-and yet, clearly, he was much more dependent on us than we were dependent on him. [I think that] we could have "moved" him much more forcefully than we did to create conditions which, in fact, would have strengthened his position in the long term. Or, to put it the other way around, would have limited the growth of the kind of forces that ended up bringing him down. But we were scared to death of doing anything that might upset him.

I guess the Philippines is another example, with Marcos. We had these bases there and, even though they were critical to the survival of that regime, they would have done all kinds of things to accommodate us. Our view was that we couldn't do anything to put pressure on them because they would kick us out.

Q: Well, this is the atmosphere in which, when you were in Ethiopia...

KULICK: That dominated everything.

Q: Kagnev Station...

KULICK: That was the tail that wagged the dog. It was a source of a lot of frustration, particularly among the more junior people in the Embassy [in Addis Ababa], because we could all see that the result of this [attitude] was a failure to employ the kind of influence that we could have used to step up the pace of "democratization." That's something of an anachronism. Actually, that wasn't the term that was used then. Now it's kind of a standard phrase for what we're trying to do to encourage greater political participation. Of course, failure to do that led to this buildup of pressure beneath the surface which exploded when finally Haile Selassie became so weak and more or less senile that he could no longer keep the lid on things. Rather than these enlightened forces that we had been encouraging him to bring along, the vacuum was filled by junior military officers who were totally frustrated by their inability to move ahead, [in view of] the leadership's unwillingness to promote serious economic liberalization and land reform. It [Ethiopia] was still a feudal society in many ways. The evolution [of events] bypassed this intermediate stage between absolute monarchy and liberal democracy. It bypassed the stage of rule by enlightened bureaucrats, swept them all aside, and installed a radical, Marxist dictatorship.

But there was a lot of ferment within the Embassy. On several occasions there were "DISSENT" [channel] messages sent in [to the Department] on various policies.

Q: In the first place, who was Ambassador during most of that time?

KULICK: The Ambassador was William O. Hall, who was really quite a good person, I think. He had been a career AID officer. Actually, not career. He'd come into AID at mid-career. He had had a fairly distinguished career in AID and then he was the Administrative Counselor in London. I don't know what he did after that, but he was appointed Ambassador to Ethiopia in 1967 or 1968. The previous Ambassador had been a journalist by the name of Edward Korry, who was a very abrasive, outspoken type. He had been quite critical of the [Haile Selassie] regime. Not surprisingly, the Ethiopians were not very enamored of him. He wasn't "recalled" in a formal sense, but I think that the Ethiopians made it clear that they wanted an Ambassador who was a little less abrasive and less undiplomatic. So they got Ambassador Hall, who was more in the traditional [ambassadorial] mold.

All of the policy papers and the country assessments and so forth made the point that Haile Selassie was winding down and that we needed to do everything we could to ensure a smooth transition. But we really were kind of halfhearted about it. I think that that led to the 1974 coup d'etat which happened after I left. We spent a lot of time informally "gaming" [the situation] among ourselves-this question which you referred to earlier. What would be the scenario which would govern Haile Selassie's departure? No one really expected that it would come from the junior ranks of the military. We thought that either the senior military would take over or there would be widespread, ethnic, separatist movements, which happened a lot later. But the idea of a young, radical, Marxist, military faction taking over the country really had not occurred to us. I think that that is because we had had very little contact with the junior ranks of the military. We spent a lot of time watching students, because they were there in the capital, very visible, and very radical.

We had a large, CIA "Station" that poured out astounding amounts of material on student movements. They clearly were convinced that this was where the real trouble was going to come from, because the [students] were open, overt, radical, and a source of constant agitation. However, as it turned out, they were really irrelevant. They were swept aside along with the aristocracy. It was the Marxist soldiers who took over. The students were real Marxists. They were opposed to military rule. When the military came in, they had no contact whatever with these young, idealistic radicals who proceeded to slaughter large numbers of [the students]. So we really missed that whole phenomenon. We missed predicting it.

Q: As a political officer, how did you go about your work?

KULICK: I was the Amharic language officer in the Embassy, so my "beat" was among those sectors in society which were somewhat less sophisticated and less articulate in English. I covered the student scene, the Parliament-and there was a Parliament of sorts there. I did provincial reporting. I did a lot of traveling around the countryside, talking to priests, farmers, local administrators, and so forth. I had a wonderful time. I thought that this was why I joined the Foreign Service. This was what it was all about. I wrote long airgrams on the changing role of the [Coptic] Church in Ethiopia and had voluminous biographic files on every member of Parliament, student leaders, and others. I didn't deal with higher politics. That was done at the level of the Ambassador, the DCM, and the Political Counselor. I really worked at the "grass roots" level. I must confess that even I didn't discern that the junior military were going to come...

Q: Isn't this always the problem? The junior military is the hardest place [to contact]. This has happened again and again, throughout the world. It's the hardest [group] for an Embassy to penetrate-even for our attaché's. They usually are talking at one level. The people who are going to pull that type of coup d'etat probably are less sophisticated and aren't going to be the ones who will be talking to [our military attaché's].

KULICK: Yes, but I think that in Africa, at least, military intervention usually came from the top. There wasn't much precedent for [a coup by junior officers]. Later you had Sgt Doe in Liberia and people like that. But generally it was the Army commander, although Libya [was a different example].

Q: We got caught in Greece, where I served, a little later on. We thought that in 1967 the generals were all set for their coup. Instead, the colonels took the generals' plan and staged a coup against the generals.

KULICK: I had a very rude awakening when I came back from Addis Ababa and was assigned to the Department. I went around to the [Ethiopian] desk, thinking that they would want to debrief me and extract all of the knowledge that I had acquired there. They didn't seem to be very interested. I thought that they had at least benefited from all the reporting I'd done. I made reference to a couple of the reports I was particularly proud of having prepared-these long, analytical airgrams. I was absolutely crestfallen to discover that not only did they not remember them but, in many cases, they probably hadn't even read them! I was doing great work for some kind of doctoral dissertation, but most of this stuff was completely irrelevant as far as the Department was concerned. But there was never any critique. I never got any feedback from the Department, saying something like, "This is nice, but we're not interested in it." I had trouble finding people in INR [Bureau of Intelligence Research] who read the stuff very closely. The analyst for Ethiopia had read them, but I don't think that the Director of the Office of Research for Africa had read them. They were probably right. It probably was largely irrelevant. I'm not suggesting that if they'd read these reports, we would have been able to avert the disaster that befell our policy in Ethiopia. I wonder whether junior reporting officers get better guidance [elsewhere].

Q: I suspect not. You never turn somebody off. But at the same time there's a different set of priorities, and maybe to the detriment of policy. But there it is-too much is coming in...

KULICK: There's just too much information. I was sorry to see the airgram format abolished. Not that it was that much better, coming [into the Department] by pouch than by cable. When you deal with cables, there's a limit to what you feel you can comfortably write-though maybe less so than now, when it's become so automated. [When I was in Ethiopia], you wouldn't sent a 10-page telegram. It would be too much of a burden on the communicators.

Q: As I mentioned before, I was the INR officer for the Horn of Africa.

KULICK: In what period?

Q: 1960-61. I read everything that I could because I didn't know anything about it. There really wasn't much coming out, so I could absorb everything. But it didn't go any higher.

KULICK: Although, hopefully, it informs your analysis...

Q: For me it was probably essential, because I didn't have anything else to work with.

KULICK: Did you work with Anne Read?

Q: No.

KULICK: She was the analyst who worked on the Horn of Africa for many years. She really benefited from all of that reporting.

Q: How did you find the people you met [in East Africa]? You mentioned that the Ethiopians were different from the Somalis, but how were your contacts with the people you met?

KULICK: I dealt a lot with members of Parliament. It was kind of a rubber stamp operation, but it did have representatives from all over the country. If you got to know them, outside of their official capacity, you were able to get a sense of how life was like outside the capital. For the most part it was quite quiescent. This was not a bubbling cauldron of political discontent. Ethiopian society was still largely traditional and intact. It was beginning to change.

Interestingly enough, and if one gains nothing else from this tape, it might be this observation. I think that the advent of the Peace Corps had a great deal to do with the change which Ethiopia underwent. I can't speak for the rest of Africa, particularly, but in the case of Ethiopia the Peace Corps hit that country like a tidal wave. That exaggerates [the impact] in terms of the physical scope of it, but psychologically and culturally it had an enormous impact because here was a country which was still largely feudal in its social structure and very backward. It had a very primitive kind of school system. On the whole, the teachers were a fairly timid lot. All of a sudden, in the early 1960's, you got 200-300 young, idealistic Americans moving around the country, assigned to every secondary school in the country, I think-virtually without exception. They came from an atmosphere of great, political ferment in the United States. The Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-War Movement, the Kennedy period-these highly mobilized youth. And here they were, sent off to a country that had no experience with that kind of outspokenness, that kind of challenge of authority which was the life blood of young Americans in those days. I'm not suggesting that they went out, preaching revolution or anything like that. But just by their very example, just by their teaching these [Ethiopian] kids about the U. S. constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the United Nations, and what was going on in the rest of Africa-to say nothing of what was going on in the United States-you had this sudden, sharp increase in expectations among young Ethiopians, with no real prospect of those expectations being satisfied. That had a very destabilizing effect on [Ethiopian] society, I think.

Again, this was done with the best of intentions. But you had a corps of people who were infusing ideas and creating expectations which the society was not equipped to handle. I think that this certainly spilled over into the military. After all, junior [Ethiopian] military officers were people who had a secondary education of some sort. They took this experience with them into the military, and it didn't take a whole lot of brains to see that the high school students could do something about the situation. This had everything to do with the radicalization of the university population. Unfortunately and ironically, much of this agitation took the form of anti-Americanism. These kids who readily acknowledged that they got their education and ideas from American teachers nevertheless "leapfrogged" over that and went way beyond...

Q: Why would they turn on America?

KULICK: Because we were in this anomalous position. Here we had these students out there-these young Americans out there, teaching them about democracy, economic development, and the free expression of political ideas. At the same time, we were the principal supporters-in fact, the sole political supporters-of the Haile Selassie regime. They [the Ethiopian students] said, "Here you've come over to tell us about democracy, and yet you're supporting the regime which prevents the emergence of democracy in our country." So, even though, in a real sense, they owed all of their political knowledge and awareness to Americans, they looked upon America as a retrograde force in Ethiopia. A lot of the Peace Corps Volunteers were bewildered by all of this. They thought that they had been sent out there to help these people and give them the means to move into the modern world and to create a modern society-and the [Ethiopian] students were turning on them. And turn on them they did. The Peace Corps had to be withdrawn-even from small, provincial towns-because the students were throwing rocks at them, attacking them, and really making life impossible for them.

These [impressions] were from my last year [in Ethiopia], 1972, which was the zenith of the anti-American feeling. The government had to consider closing the university down, sent troops onto the campus a couple of times, and shot some students. It really was quite ugly. Meanwhile, the United States was dithering-not really knowing what to do about all this. Of course, the Emperor and his entourage played the Kagnew Station card to the hilt. Ironically, and again, I think that this was a major turning point, in 1971 Ambassador Hall completed his tour and was replaced by a recently defeated, Republican Congressman from Indiana, named E. Ross Adair, as Ambassador. He was a man with no diplomatic experience and no imagination whatsoever. I'm sure that Sinclair Lewis [the author] must have [thought of someone like] Ross Adair when he wrote "Babbitt." He was a real "Babbitt" kind of figure and was being paid off for 20 years of loyal service to the Republican Party in Congress with this ambassadorship. This was a wholly inappropriate appointment at a time when everybody could see that our relations with Ethiopia were at a critical point. What we needed was a strong American Ambassador who could really "kick ass" and exercise the influence that was ours to deploy at that point. Instead, they sent this-well, there's no purpose in using pejorative adjectives at this point. He just was not at all up to the job. He had a DCM who was a martinet and utterly devoid of any imagination-the classic bureaucrat of a DCM. It was really in that period when things began to spin out of control in Ethiopia.

I'm not saying that if we'd had the right American Ambassador there-if we'd had Tom Pickering there, for example-he could have singlehandedly rescued the situation. But I really have little doubt that the absence of a strong U. S. Ambassador and a coherent policy [affected the situation]. Those two conditions are not necessarily identical, though they are part and parcel of the same thing. This reflected a phenomenon of neglect of a very important area.

Q: How did this affect you as a reporting officer at the junior level? If there's going to be dissent, it usually comes from this area. It's almost endemic to the system. The more senior people deal at the policy level and tend to follow that, whereas the younger officers get out on the street more often and are in contact with the students and some of the "castoffs" of the political system. This is the younger officers' bailiwick, and they're seeing a different reality.

KULICK: Well, fortunately, the Political Counselor was not so much personally in touch [with such groups], but he respected my access and my perspective. Of course, junior officers don't make policy recommendations. They report the facts, and the policy recommendations are in the hands of people further up the line. So I didn't find myself butting heads over policy, although on several occasions I did take issue with the more general drift of our policy, rather than with specific policies. I felt that we needed to be more vigorous, we needed to be much more pointed in our discourse, and move things ahead, such as pressing ahead on land reform. Most of the land was held by a few aristocratic landowners and the [Coptic] Church. Most of the people who worked the land were landless, tenant farmers. This clearly was going to be a source of great instability. We wanted to use the leverage inherent in the aid program or the military assistance program to pursue those kinds of objectives. We were unwilling to link levels of aid with performance on the political level. I can recall putting together several memoranda, which got a respectful hearing, but that's all.

In 1975 the Eritrean Liberation Front was laying siege to Asmara and was very close to capturing the place, which would essentially have led to the secession of Eritrea. The Ethiopians came to us in a panic, asking for emergency military aid. I took the position that, in the long run, there was no military solution to the Eritrean situation. The war had been going on for 10 years and, while we had some obligation to support them as a long term ally, we should place very tight strings on this aid. We should say that we would help them out now to prevent the government from going down to military defeat, but only if the government would use that respite to pursue a political, a compromise solution. That would mean that they would have to accord a lot of autonomy to Eritrea. Well, that idea was not accepted [in the Embassy]. We did provide aid, although not in the amounts that they had asked for or even in the amounts that we had initially intended to give them. But the basic notion of "quid pro quo" was not pursued.

We had discussions like that, having more to do with the economic rather than the military aid program while I was at the Embassy [in Addis Ababa]. There were not many head to head confrontations. We more or less recognized that it was part of the culture-the younger officers were going to take a more activist posture in a case like this than the senior leadership of the Embassy, although, again, the senior leadership was so unimaginative and so timid that it went beyond the kind of situation typical in an embassy. It had very sad consequences for our relations with Ethiopia.

Q: You left Addis Ababa in 1972 and you came back to Washington.

KULICK: Yes, I figured that it was time to get back to Washington. I had been overseas for two tours and had not had any time in Washington. As I mentioned earlier, my reporting had essentially been from the field. I realized that going off to the field without having time in Washington really puts you at a disadvantage. You have no idea how things really work in Washington. In fact, I would support the idea of perhaps sending someone overseas for his first tour, but the second tour should really be back in Washington.

I was really very interested in environmental affairs then-and now. It was my sort of second "love" after foreign policy. I still wasn't sure that I was committed, on a long term basis, to the State Department. The Vietnam War was still going on, and I hadn't really been in the Foreign Service long enough to be at the point of no return. I felt that an assignment in environmental affairs would give me a chance to develop another string to my bow. If I decided that I wanted to do something else, this would be kind of a bridge to things outside the Foreign Service. In addition to its being a new and exciting addition to our foreign policy, this was the year of the UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm.

Q: People were just beginning...

KULICK: This was the first real effort to develop global awareness of the environmental issue. When I was on home leave in 1971, I went around and lobbied fairly heavily for a job in environmental affairs when I came back from Addis Ababa. In those days we didn't have "open assignments." The Department didn't have the whole, elaborate system of "bids" for given positions.

Q: You either took what you got or you did a little investigating on your own.

KULICK: Well, anybody worth his salt could have gone out and tried to find himself a job [in the Department]. The truth is that, despite all of the "open assignment" refinements and folderol, that still is the way things work. In fact, I think quite firmly, that the Foreign Service is kind of a Darwinian system, but it works reasonably well. The best people get the best jobs and, by and large, the weaker people get the lesser jobs.

This is kind of a digression here, but I think that the concept of "open assignments" was a great innovation and is very important just to ensure that there aren't too many "side deals" made that keep "outsiders" out. However, by and large, this simply routinized or regularized the basic, prevailing principle, which is that the good guys get the best jobs. Obviously, they have the most bargaining power. They're the most...

Q: Sought after.

KULICK: Sought after. The less sought after get the leftovers.

Q: The best jobs usually mean more of a chance for promotion. But that's the way the system should work.

KULICK: It's kind of Darwinian, but after all Darwinian is not necessarily a negative term. It's a term that accurately describes how the species evolved. Anyhow, I wanted very much to get this job in environmental affairs. At the time this office was still in a fledgling state. They didn't know how many jobs they would have and they couldn't make me any promises. But I continued the correspondence after I got back to Ethiopia. The long and the short of it was that I was assigned to this office and was delighted. At about this time, in fact, the DCM in Addis Ababa told me that he could help me get a job in the Executive Secretariat. He was sure that he could arrange it. I told him that I wasn't interested. He was appalled. He said, "You don't understand. That's your ticket to rapid advancement and success in the Foreign Service."

Q: So you got your job with the Office of Environmental Affairs.

KULICK: Yes, I came in just after the Stockholm Conference. For me it was the perfect kind of working environment. The office was composed mostly of people who, like myself, had volunteered for these jobs, because they really were interested in the subject. There was no pool of environmental officers to draw from. Everybody who was there was more or less self-nominated, to one degree or another. Again, I was the most junior officer in the office. I was beginning to think that, wherever I went, I was always going to be the youngest guy there.

I had the "Bilateral" portfolio in that office. That is, I was responsible for handling bilateral environmental issues with Mexico and Canada, primarily, but also environmental cooperation agreements we had with the Soviet Union and with Japan. The rest of the office dealt with the UN system, including global environmental issues like ocean dumping, marine pollution, and that kind of thing, whereas I was assigned work dealing with bilateral issues that might affect our bilateral relations in a few instances. It was a thoroughly fascinating, challenging, and enjoyable job, although, again, I kept trying to explain to people that I asked for this. In those days-and probably even still today-the perception was that a place like the Science Bureau was kind of where the losers hang out.

Q: A parking place.

KULICK: It didn't bother me that people might think like that because that was what I really wanted to do, whereas my really ambitious colleagues were the ones who were on the line and in the Executive Secretariat, or looking for jobs in the European Bureau or something like that. Who knows? Maybe they were right. Maybe it did affect my career. I don't know. However, as I said, I looked upon this, not only in its own terms, but as a possible avenue toward doing things outside the State Department in the environmental field. As it turned out, I concluded that I really did enjoy the diplomatic side of things and didn't really, actively look for alternatives outside the State Department.

As I say, I handled the diplomatic, as opposed to the scientific side of the cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union. This was an agreement that President Nixon had signed when he went to Moscow in early 1972. It was one of the first fruits of detente. It turned out to be one of the most enduring fruits of detente, because even when detente went sour and we were back to confrontation in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the environmental cooperation agreement just ticked right along. Scientists continued to work productively together, and, I think, probably still do, although I'm not sure what the status of it is now. On a wide variety of issues-air pollution, wildlife management, migratory water fowl, marine mammals, you name it-we had a sub-agreement under this umbrella accord where Russian and American scientists were working together. There even was one agreement on the legal and administrative aspects of environmental protection. That was put in there so that guys like me would have an excuse to make a trip to Russia. Indeed, I took a three week trip to the Soviet Union while in that job, which was certainly one of the highlights of my Foreign Service experience.

The year before I had hosted a Russian delegation which had come to the U. S. to deal with these administrative and legal questions. I took them around the country, to Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. They met with professors of environmental law and local EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] officials. They took a lot of notes and asked a lot of questions but never offered anything in return. Then when I escorted an American delegation to the Soviet Union, our delegation went around from place to place in the Soviet Union. The Russians took a lot of notes and asked a lot of questions but didn't give a whole lot back. [Laughter] But it was a very productive period. I did things like write the environmental impact statement on an LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) pipeline that needed a permit. For some reason the rules said that LPG pipelines had to get permits from the State Department, not from the Federal Power Commission or whoever else dealt with other energy matters. The pipelines had to get a permit to cross the border. That was the point at which we came in. There had to be an environmental impact statement, and I was the guy who wrote it, although I was not a scientist. It was great fun.

We had several, cross border pollution problems with Canada that occupied a great deal of my time. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement was a truly major issue between the United States and Canada. We had negotiated and signed with the Canadians a multi-year, multi-objective agreement for improving the quality of water in the Great Lakes. This involved targets for the reduction of phosphates and agricultural runoff, sewage treatment, and all that kind of thing. EPA handled the technical side of things. We in the State Department handled the diplomatic aspect.

Q: What major sticking points did you find? Were American or foreign business the problem or...

KULICK: It was just an exceedingly complex agreement. It involved dozens of state and local jurisdictions and agricultural, industrial, and municipal interests. It wasn't so much that we were fighting concerted opposition. It was just a matter of trying to pull all of this together. We didn't do all of this coordination, but we dealt with Canadian concerns about non-compliance on our side and carried our concern to Canada about Canadian non-compliance or difficulties in compliance, such as adhering to time tables and that kind of thing. I made a couple of trips to Ottawa for consultations on that. Farther West the problems had to do with cross border, river, or air pollution. We had a big lead smelter in Idaho or Montana which blew lead, arsenic, and all kinds of things into Canada. Not surprisingly, the Canadians were very exercised about that. It turned out that they had a smelter on their side of the border which blew stuff over onto our side. We were able at least to counter their indignation.

There was one issue which I became very much involved in, a massive reclamation and irrigation project in North Dakota, called the Garrison Diversion Project. It had literally been going on since the 1930's. It involved building a number of huge dams and diverting the Missouri River into vast irrigation projects, most of which didn't concern the Canadians because they were largely on the U. S. side. However, there was one little river there that flowed down from Canada into the U. S. and flowed back into Canada. It was called the Souris River. It made a loop. One aspect of the Garrison Diversion Project involved diverting water from the watershed of the Missouri River, over the mountains, and into the watershed of the river which flowed into Canada. This involved a huge amount of agricultural runoff into this river and the introduction of exotic species. It had a lot of ecological implications. The Canadians had made a number of diplomatic representations to us about this project. As the State Department is always accused of doing, we took our "client's" concerns as our concerns. This project was very controversial in the environmental and even the agricultural community. It was a gigantic "pork barrel" project that ended up subsidizing the farmers up there to the tune of about \$100,000 per irrigated acre. It was just an outrageous waste of resources. We were spending roughly \$100,000 an acre to reclaim agricultural land to grow crops which were in surplus and then were bought and stuck into warehouses. There were several millionaire North Dakota farmers that were getting rich out of this project, with very little benefit to anyone.

Along with a lot of other people we lobbied the Interior Department. The Interior Department was very eager to win us over and prove to us what a really beneficial project this was. So they took five or six-more than that-about a dozen people from the State Department, from EPA, and from various other government agencies that had problems with this project, flew us up to Minot, North Dakota, and put on a three day "dog and pony show," taking us around to all of these irrigation projects, flying us over them, and showing us what a beautiful green it was, whereas the area not included in it was all brown and parched. Leaving aside the fact that the crops being grown were surplus to our needs, anyway. They gave us extended explanations that the Canadians were not going to be affected by all of this. It didn't win anybody over that I can recall, but it was a very graphic demonstration of how government agencies "log roll" and lobby each other. I hadn't realized that that kind of thing went on. What was really memorable for me was that I was in Minot, North Dakota, the day that President Richard Nixon resigned, in 1974. I watched his resignation speech at a hotel in North Dakota. That was probably the most memorable part of the trip.

I really did enjoy it and had as much achievement to show for that assignment as almost anything that I did later on, because this involved dealing with real issues and practical interests. It wasn't more abstract and intangible stuff such as Foreign Service Officers spend so much of their careers dealing with.

I did similar things on the border with Mexico-problems with untreated sewage flowing into the U. S. in Tijuana and problems in the Rio Grande Valley.

The technical cooperation agreements with the Soviets produced not only political detente. This was one of the few areas where the Russians had some specific things to offer us that we could profit from. As in all of the agreements, they got a lot more from us than we got from them, but it wasn't a wholly one-sided thing.

I guess that the high point of that particular tour was the two weeks that I spent as a rapporteur at an international conference, which we had promoted, about commercial trade in endangered species. It was convened in Washington to draft a treaty. It was a plenipotentiary conference held at the State Department in the Diplomatic Conference area there. There were delegates from 40 or 50 countries in attendance. This was partly a result of the Stockholm Conference. The purpose was to draft a treaty which would control or lay down rules and conditions for the trade in endangered species. The meeting ran for two weeks. I was one of the rapporteurs at the meeting, meaning that I took notes and produced records of the discussions at the end of the day.

To me it was an utterly fascinating experience. It was the only experience I've had like that, watching a treaty go from start to finish. There had been preparatory committees which had produced a basic draft. This meeting didn't start with a blank piece of paper but rather with an outline of a treaty-or maybe even a draft that had been produced by working groups. The central issue was what species would be designated for protection, what mechanisms would be set up for adding additional species to the list as time goes on, new threats to new species of wildlife as they emerge, and what rules would govern trade. That is, should we ban trade entirely, should we try to put limits on numbers, what kind of certification would be required by countries on wildlife being imported, and so forth. I think that it could have been a case study. Someone could have prepared a wonderful documentary on how a treaty is produced. There were plenary groups meeting in the afternoon and working groups meeting in the morning, considering different pieces of the treaty, finally piecing it all together at the end.

What emerged at the end of two weeks was a convention on the international trade in species of wild fauna and flora. That was the full name of the treaty. Today-almost 20 years later-it is a major instrument in the effort to protect wildlife and prevent the destruction of species of wildlife. It's been considerably strengthened since that initial text was produced. I think that that's very often the case. You start with the lowest common denominator and, as time goes on, people become more used to it, see how it works, and are prepared to extend its provisions and make them tougher, particularly in connection with environmental agreements. To me it was a fascinating experience. Certainly, at that point-and maybe up to the very end-it was the thing I could point to as the most satisfying experience I had had, even though I was just a small cog.

Q: But you were still part of the action.

KULICK: In fact, as a rapporteur, I suppose you could say that I was really just an observer, although I did participate in some of the work. However, the satisfaction came from the knowledge that this had real, measurable, important consequences for the quality of life on earth. To me that's what all of this is about.

Q: Of course it is.

KULICK: That's what all of what we do is about. Often it's just much harder to measure. I suppose that if I'd worked on the SALT II treaty and had come out at the end of that with a treaty that had...

Q: That's the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty.

KULICK: ...materially made the world a safer place, I would have the same kind of sense. I think that that's what keeps an awful lot of us going and motivated, in the sense that we're making a real difference. And not in a narrow, chauvinistic kind of way, such as making the world safer for General Motors. I think that most Foreign Service Officers are not at all motivated by that kind of narrow, nationalistic, self-interested kind of thing. We are, on the whole, a pretty idealistic lot, in my experience.

But that sums up the two years I spent in environmental affairs.

Q: That was from...

KULICK: 1972 to 1974.

Q: Then for a year...

KULICK: Yes. We still didn't have open assignments. I had kept in touch with the Office of East African Affairs during this time and knew that they were looking for a desk officer for Somalia. I think that they approached me and asked me if I wanted to have the job. With very little hesitation I took it. I was desk officer for Somalia and assistant desk officer for Ethiopia, which was a much bigger job. By this time the Somali Government had been overthrown and its military dictatorship had been installed.

Q: Led by Siad Barre.

KULICK: Yes. It [the military dictatorship] had embarked on a major flirtation with the Soviet Union. In fact, by that time they were already on our enemies list. In fact, I dare say that Somalia was one of the African countries which we were on the worst terms with. So that had a certain amount of appeal. At that point the "creeping coup d'etat" in Ethiopia that toppled the Emperor was already well under way. In fact, Anne Read, my friend from INR [Bureau of Intelligence Research], used to call me regularly and ask my opinion on the significance of events going on there. I kind of "pooh-poohed" a lot of it. There was a taxi strike in Addis Ababa which, in retrospect, turned out to be the first shot fired in the revolution. She said, "This looks pretty serious. All of the taxicabs are on strike." I said, "Oh, that kind of thing goes on all the time. It doesn't mean anything." Well, it did mean something, and she caught it pretty early.

By May, 1974, it was clear that Ethiopia was on the skids. In August, 1974, I went over to the desk. In September, 1974, the Emperor was trundled into the back seat of a blue, Volkswagen "Beetle" and driven away into imprisonment and ignominy. I embarked on what started out to be a year of absolutely gripping desk work. Ethiopia was coming unglued, the Emperor was deposed, and he was replaced by what turned out to be a Kerensky-like figure, General Aman, who was of the class that we had been encouraging all along, a member of the educated, enlightened bureaucracy. But it was too late. The revolution came too late for people like this. I think that the analogy with the February and October [1917] revolutions [in Russia] was quite suitable-quite apt. The initial figures who took over were members of a moderate, enlightened, Westernized group. But they were really just stalking horses for the young radicals [in the military] who dispensed with them very quickly. In the case of Ethiopia over a period of three or four months they shoved them aside and took full control of the government. They got even more radical in the ensuing years.

By December, [1974], it was pretty clear that we weren't dealing with a bunch of reformers but had some really hard core, revolutionaries on our hands. At the same time the Russians were moving more deeply into Somalia, with the base that they had established at Berbera, in the northern part of Somalia along the Red Sea coast. They put a major missile-handling facility there. They built a port to service their Indian Ocean Fleet. They would bring naval missiles [into Berbera] for refurbishing, refitting, and storage. The U. S. was getting really agitated about this, particularly on the Hill [Congress]. A few, really conservative Congressmen were calling for us to cut off relations with Ethiopia and with Somalia.

Satellite technology was just coming into its own. We were able to get very detailed, satellite photos of these Russian installations in Berbera. The Somalis were denying that any of this was going on, stating that this was just an agricultural equipment depot in the middle of the desert. They invited the U. S. to send a Congressional delegation to Somalia to inspect these facilities. It reminded me a little bit of the British holding a referendum in Kenya-did they really think that we were going to come over there and they were going to pull the wool over our eyes? We sent a delegation, and the delegation found exactly what it expected to find. The Somalis were furious. They said, "We invited you over here, we gave you the full run of everything, and then you came back with this outrageous report." Our delegation said that it was only reporting what it saw.

Relations with Somalia were very rough. There was a lot of dialogue back and forth with the Embassy about what they were really up to—were they really Russian stooges, were they really communists, or were the Somalis cynically taking advantage of the Cold War to build up their arsenal and milk as much aid as they could out of both sides? In many ways I think it was a classic example of the differing perspectives between the post in the field and the policy makers back in Washington. The people in the Embassy in Mogadishu were much more relaxed about all of this. They said that the Somalis weren't communists. They were just manipulating us and the Russians. They said that we should keep in touch with them but not let them get us all bent out of shape. The military [in Washington] were getting really agitated about the Soviet facilities [in Somalia].

Q: This was the period when Secretary of State Kissinger was at the height of his influence. Kissinger saw everything in terms of the Cold War and an international, bipolar system.

KULICK: Our dilemma was that we had put most of our eggs into the Ethiopian basket for many, many years. Ethiopia was clearly coming unglued, and we didn't really know what to do because, even though they had become very radical, they kept coming to us and continuing to ask us for more military assistance, citing the Russian buildup in Somalia. Kagnev Station was still in operation there [in Ethiopia], and the [U. S.] military was still saying that it was important. The Ethiopians were threatening to close it down unless we helped them, and the Somalis were beginning to build up to what looked like some intention of launching an offensive [against Ethiopia], taking advantage of the chaos in Ethiopia. Even though the military regime had taken over in Addis Ababa, the rebellion in Eritrea was getting really critical. That was the point at which the [Ethiopian] request for assistance to fight off the Eritrean rebels in Asmara was made. I think that by the end of 1975 it became clear that we were just not going to be able to sustain it [an enhanced military assistance program] with the Ethiopians.

They would continue to try to get whatever they could out of us. But they, unlike the Somalis, really were committed revolutionaries. Sooner or later, they were going to boot us out of there [Kagnev Station]. I don't know. Things just sort of spun out of control. We didn't feel that we had an option in Somalia because the Russians were firmly ensconced there, while our base in Ethiopia was eroding. At that point the Russians began to make inroads into Ethiopia, and it looked as though they were going to take over the whole Horn of Africa. However, they hadn't really reckoned on the aggressiveness of their Somali clients. The Russians thought that they could hold this all together. They thought, in fact, that they could impose a "Pax Sovietica" on the Horn of Africa, but the Somalis weren't having any of that. They thought that the Ethiopians were really in a very weakened condition. The Somalis took advantage of their Soviet support and equipment to attack Ethiopia. At this point the Soviets, who were beginning to make real inroads into Ethiopia, told the Somalis that they couldn't do that. The Somalis replied, in effect, "Go to hell," kicked the Soviets out of Somalia, and invited the Americans in. [Laughter]

So in the space of three months there was an exchange of clients, and we took the leftovers in Somalia, while the Russians moved into Ethiopia. That was after I left the desk, though.

We could end this segment by my recounting how, after a year on the job I was approached by the then Special Assistant to the Director of INR...

Q: Today is July 2, 1993. We're continuing the interview. You were saying that you were approached by...

KULICK: Yes, I think I was telling you how, after a year on the job as desk officer for Somalia and Ethiopia, I was approached by the Special Assistant to the Director of INR, who, in fact, had been my predecessor in my job in Addis Ababa, to see if I was interested in replacing him as Special Assistant to the Director of INR, who was then William Hyland. I considered the maxim that one should always seize opportunities for new experiences and professional broadening. I had spent seven of my first nine years in the Foreign Service, working on the Horn of Africa. I thought that I was well advised to seize the opportunity, even though things were then beginning to get very interesting in the Horn. So I accepted the offer. This was back before the days of "open assignments," when you basically got your job by personal connections.

It was a truly interesting job, a one-year assignment. It was a one-year assignment because the assumption was that people more or less "burned out" after a year. This was a 12 or 14 hour a day job. You usually only had such jobs for a year at a time. So I figured that I could try it for a year.

I was only on the job for a couple of months when Hyland was called over to the White House by [then Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs] Kissinger to be Kissinger's "eyes and ears" [on the National Security Council-NSC-staff] when Kissinger became Secretary of State or when he dropped the NSC part of his dual-hatted role. I don't recall who became the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, but, in any case, Kissinger wanted to make sure that he had control or at least very close observation of what went on over there. As Hyland was one of Kissinger's long-time disciples, he left INR and went over to the White House. Hyland was replaced in INR by Hal Saunders, who had been a Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA and was appointed Director of INR, which was equivalent to an Assistant Secretary of State position. That changed the nature of the job considerably for me because Hyland was very much a Soviet and arms control specialist, while Saunders was an NEA/Middle East hand, which was an area which I had long followed from the outside because, up to that time, I had not worked in NEA.

In any case there were no other staff assistants, so I was the principal, organizational link between the Director of INR and the rest of the Bureau and essentially the staff level and the rest of the Department. It was an extremely busy year. That was the year when Congress was investigating the intelligence establishment, the year of the Church Commission in the Senate and the Otis Pike Commission on the House of Representatives side. There were numerous, lengthy reports being prepared on the intelligence community, and this, of course, included INR. Saunders, as the chief intelligence officer in the Department of State, was the "point" man for the Department in all of these hearings. This involved going through massive numbers of documents and clearing them for the committees to see and so forth. I also vetted all reports and analytical papers which came in from the Bureau for the Director's clearance. He basically cleared all but the most routine kind of papers. So it turned out to be a good, 14 hour a day job but one that I found quite challenging and rewarding.

Q: Here you were from outside [the intelligence community] and you were looking at everything that came through. What is your impression of the quality of the output from INR, the analyses, and policy recommendations? Also, did you get any feel for how these things were used in real life?

KULICK: As you know, INR is not in the policy recommendation business, at least theoretically. INR's mandate is to analyze intelligence from all sources, including Foreign Service reporting and clandestine reports from CIA, and to produce finished intelligence, primarily for the Secretary of State. I guess that most INR reports don't go out of the Department. Intelligence which goes to the White House usually comes from CIA. The State Department, through INR, sits on the inter-agency bodies that produce National Intelligence Estimates. So State's contribution to them is very important.

I thought that the quality of the analysis was really quite mixed. I think it varied a great deal, depending on the experience and quality of the analyst. There were certain offices in INR that were staffed primarily by civil servants, people who had been doing their particular work for many years and who really did it very well. My sense is that the offices that tended to be more heavily staffed by Foreign Service Officers, on the whole produced less consistently good intelligence. This was not because Foreign Service Officers were less capable but simply because they came out of a different kind of culture, and it took them a while to adapt to the INR style.

Q: As I mentioned before, I had the INR desk for the Horn of Africa from 1960 to 1961. I had never served there.

KULICK: That was a little unusual. I think that, by and large, they tried to staff those offices with people who knew the various regions first hand, if they are FSO's. But occasionally, a rule like that breaks down, I guess.

As to how INR reports were used, I think that the variable there is the consumer as much as the producer. I had no sense that Kissinger was terribly influenced by what INR produced, although Saunders personally had a great deal of influence on Kissinger.

Q: Saunders was a figure of some importance within the State Department at various times. What was your impression of how he operated?

KULICK: Calling him "low key" understates the matter considerably. He is extremely low key, very modest, soft-spoken, and cautious. I think that he is brilliant in his analytical capacities. However, later on in his career, I think he tended to be a bit idealistic. To me, that is not a pejorative term, but occasionally I thought that his idealism tended to color his judgments about things. I wasn't so much aware of that tendency when he was Director of INR as later on. He is a very broad thinker and likes to think in conceptual terms. I think that's why Kissinger liked him. I honestly was so involved with and taken up by the Middle East side of what he was doing that I don't recall focussing very closely on the other kinds of things he did personally. For example, Cold War analysis. However, I had the highest respect for his integrity and honesty and for the clarity of his thinking, as well as the breadth of his vision.

Q: Even with a very powerful Secretary of State did you get the feeling that we had to tailor our reports to meet the Secretary's outlook?

KULICK: No, although that has certainly happened at various times. Paradoxically, it may have happened more frequently with less powerful Secretaries of State. In such cases people in INR and further down the chain may have thought that they had more license to tailor analyses to their own policy directions because they felt that the man at the top was more easily influenced or led. I say it is paradoxical, because one might expect that when you're working for someone like Kissinger, you'd be afraid to produce anything that didn't serve his policy predilections. But in the case of Saunders, at least, I never had the feeling that that was going on.

Q: Then you left that job in INR-you were there for about a year?

KULICK: Yes.

Q: What year was that?

KULICK: That was 1975 to 1976. What followed was the real turning point in my career, at least. In the course of a year [in INR] I got to know people all over the State Department and became much more aware of how the system worked and who was doing what. I don't remember exactly how this came about, but I met a fellow working on the Israel desk, named Mike Sternberg. I remembered very clearly being struck that Sternberg was working on the Israel desk, because it had been almost taken as a "given," from the time that I entered the Foreign Service, that Jews were not assigned to work on Middle Eastern affairs, and certainly not on Israeli affairs. I remember saying to him that an assignment like his wasn't supposed to happen. He said that he had been told the same thing but he just decided to test the system and found that, in fact, there was no resistance to such an assignment. No one ever spelled this out, but it would seem to me to have something to do with the fact that you had a Secretary of State named Henry Kissinger who, while hardly a card-carrying Zionist or a synagogue-going Jew, certainly would have fit the category of people who hitherto had been supposedly excluded from Middle East policy affairs.

Q: As a matter of fact Kissinger had been excluded from Israeli affairs for a while during the Nixon administration, when he was National Security Adviser. At least it's been said that he left it to Secretary of State William Rogers to "play" with the Middle East while he did everything else.

KULICK: Yes. That's interesting. That may have been his own decision. I confess that I have not read Kissinger's memoirs. He may have addressed this question, although, knowing his ego, he probably didn't. In any case, by 1975 any taboo that may have existed previously was about to disappear, and Mike Sternberg was more or less the first, entering wedge. There also was a Jewish political officer serving in Tel Aviv at that time.

Q: He was John L. Hirsch.

KULICK: So I thought, if he can do it, I can do it. I went over and said that I understood that there would be an opening on the desk. I speak Hebrew, I know the region, I had been a student in Israel, and so forth. Again, this was before the process of "open assignments" began. At that time, if you worked out a deal with the office director, that was it. The Bureau said that it wanted me, and I was assigned.

That really was kind of a turning point in my career because all of this sort of "pent up" desire to get involved in Likud issues was released. I had what I found to be a very exciting assignment in the Office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs (IAI). I dealt with human rights and settlements issues, as well as United Nations affairs, all of which were really meaty questions. I did a great deal of "outreach" work, you might say. I went out and did a lot of public speaking. I spoke to a lot of Jewish groups, often quite hostile because the State Department then-and I suppose even now-enjoys a very bad reputation in the Jewish community, much of which, I think, is long outdated. However, it probably goes back to the 1930's. The performance of the State Department in dealing with the question of Jewish refugees, Hitler, and the subsequent prosecution of the war is very well known and well documented. The allegations of anti-Semitism in the State Department...

Q: Coming from a class that was basically anti-Semitic?

KULICK: That's right. I think that subsequent writings and the release of records and so forth have authenticated that. I was not aware of that when I first got onto this speaking circuit. I was puzzled by a continuing atmosphere of suspicion and hostility that I found when I would go into a synagogue or a B'nai B'rith meeting. Almost the first question someone would ask would be, "Are you Jewish?" If I said, "Yes," they'd say, "How can you work for an organization like that?" I always thought that this view stemmed from a kind of knee-jerk objection to anybody who would criticize Israel or take issue with Israel's policies or in any way try to demonstrate a "balanced" approach to the Middle East. I mean, the view of these Jewish community group's was, "If you're not 100% for Israel, you must be anti-Semitic." There was an element of that, but it was much more complicated than that. It really had much more to do with the historical background. It was at that point that I went back and started to do some reading on the holocaust. I read a book called, "While Six Million Died," by Arthur Morse, which documents quite fully and persuasively the U. S. response to the holocaust. There is quite a bit of material in there on that subject. There are quotations from various memoranda prepared by people like Sumner Welles [World War II Deputy Secretary of State] and Loy Henderson [later Under secretary of State for Political Affairs]. I think that both of these individuals [were concerned], but I don't want to libel anyone. I recall that those were the two people who were mentioned. Also there was someone called Summerfield, I think. I don't recall precisely.

Q: There is almost a mental exercise I find myself going through as a non-Jew, every time I come up against Israeli policy. I keep going through a mental exercise, examining myself, asking whether I am falling into anti-Semitism because I have real problems with the State of Israel. I'm partly of German descent, but it doesn't mean a thing to me. I don't have to go through an examination on how I look at Germany but with Israel I go through this process. I believe that a lot of Foreign Service Officers go through the same process. However, as a Jew, dealing with Israel, did you have to go through some mental adjustments or were you examining yourself to say, "Am I being too hard or too easy?" Was this a part of your thought process?"

KULICK: No, surprisingly not, because I had always been, not exactly on the fringe-these terms are not terribly precise-but "on the Left" of the Zionist [political] spectrum, let us say, with respect to Israel. That is, particularly after 1967. Before 1967 there really wasn't much debate. But after 1967, when the Occupied Territories became a very central and emotional kind of issue, I had always been in that group which believed that it was not in Israel's interest to occupy these territories on a permanent basis. I thought that Israel, for its own sake, should go as far as possible, consistent with its essential security requirements, to make accommodations and to seek a peace agreement with the Arabs and the Palestinians. This was pretty much, I think, the policy of the U. S. Government and of the State Department. Only very rarely-in fact, almost never-do I recall the State Department taking a position that I thought was truly threatening to or disadvantageous to Israel, in my perception. That didn't mean that it didn't put us at odds with the Government of Israel, even before the Likud Government came into office. However, it was a policy that I felt comfortable with. I did not feel that it was jeopardizing Israel's security and I surely did not feel [that U. S. policy] was the result of any animus or bias against Israel. If anything, particularly during the Reagan administration, I was critical of U. S. policy as being too lenient, too accommodating, and too willing to take the Israeli point of view on subjects like the settlements [in the Occupied Territories], the invasion of Lebanon, and a variety of questions. Of course, in a highly political, highly effervescent environment like that of Israel, no matter what your point of view, you can find a significant body of people within Israeli society who share that view.

To anyone who says that this represents an anti-Israeli point of view, you can say, "Well, what about those 20 people in the Knesset whose views are precisely like this? Are they anti-Israeli, too?" [They may answer], "Well, it's different there. They live there." The point is that for me, personally, there was never any problem like that.

Q: I think this point is very important. How did you find the "outreach" program [conducted by the Israeli desk in the U. S.], particularly to the Jewish community, because they have a disproportionate impact on our political process-which means on our policy process. How did you find dealing with them? Were you able to break through or...

KULICK: Let me stop and just comment on your use of the word "disproportionate." I am assuming that you are not using that in any nefarious sense.

Q: No! I'm just saying that there are ethnic groups-I'm thinking [now] about the Greek community. I've dealt with Greek, Korean, and Croatian groups. They have more influence on our political process, say, than Turkish, Arab, or other groups.

KULICK: I think that the point is that the influence is commensurate with the degree of interest and concern on the part of the groups involved, rather than any nefarious...

Q: No, but statistically, you know...

KULICK: Well, that's true. This is an issue of very great importance. More so, probably, than any other ethnic group, the Jewish community has more of a commitment on this particular foreign policy issue with the possible exception of the Serbs and the Croats-and perhaps the Irish. I'm sorry. What was your question?

Q: It's very important for the State Department to be able to explain its position to an influential political group, as it would be to newspaper publishers or any other. You said you encountered a certain amount of initial hostility [among some Jewish community groups] to the State Department. How did you find the response [from these groups] over a period of time?

KULICK: I felt satisfied after talking to such groups if I could leave them believing that, whatever differences may exist between their particular views and those of the State Department and, therefore, of the U. S. Government, these were based, not on any animus against Israel and not any latent anti-Semitism, but on an honest disagreement stemming from different perspectives as to the broader interests of the United States in the world. In other words, this was an honest debate, discussion, or disagreement, if you will, stemming from the same set of values but from a different perspective, rather than a question of anti-Semites in the U. S. Government who were out to "get" Israel. Or, to put it the other way round, from people subject to Arab influence who are only concerned about currying favor with the Arabs because of their control of oil, money, and other kinds of resources.

If I could come away from a session like that and [have them] say, "Well, we still disagree, and you're being too hard on Israel, but we concede and we recognize that there is a basic commitment there to Israel's welfare and that the United States will not pursue any policies" which, certainly by their reckoning and any reasonably objective reckoning, are injurious or threatening to Israel. The fact that I was Jewish, that I spoke Hebrew, that I had lived in Israel, and that I came from the background that I did-undoubtedly contributed to my credibility. Although, in [the view of] some audiences that kind of thing triggers the "traitor" kind of [epithet].

Q: "Uncle Tom" or something like that. What were some of the major issues [you faced during your time on the desk]? You were there from when to when?

KULICK: This was from mid-1976 to mid-1978. The issue of [Jewish] settlements [in the Occupied Territories] was very "hot" then, even though the number of settlements and the number of settlers was one-tenth of what [they are] now. The U. S. still had not, if you will, reconciled itself to the inevitability of this process as, I think, the Reagan administration, to its discredit, did-to its great discredit it did. Every new settlement occasioned an announcement by the State Department spokesman, articles in the newspapers, and a whole debate on whether they were "legal" or not. The position of the State Department at that point was still that the settlements were not only an obstacle to peace, which was the point which was settled on by the Reagan administration, but that they were "illegal" under international law. Of course, you can imagine that [that position] gave many Jewish lawyers a field day. Although most don't [practice] international law, there were several who prepared very trenchant and scholarly legal defenses. This was an issue that was debated endlessly. As I say, ultimately the Reagan administration withdrew from that position, either because they felt it wasn't worth fighting for or because they had a Legal Adviser [in the State Department] who had a different or more sympathetic view. That was one issue.

Q: How did you get involved?

KULICK: Human rights questions were also very controversial. It was during that period, under the Carter administration, that the State Department began issuing annual human rights reports. I wrote the first report [on Israel].

Q: This must have been the "touchiest" one. Surely, everybody must have been looking over your shoulder to see how this would be done, because all the other [reports] were difficult, but this one...

KULICK: Every word was parsed and every comma was examined. Long after all the other reports were in, that one was still outstanding.

Q: The first human rights report was a seminal document. The first one really had to be just right. What happened? This was at the beginning of the Carter administration [1977]. [The report on] Israel was the most controversial. Everybody would be looking at this one. Would we be fair?

KULICK: That's right.

Q: People would say, "Is this a real report?" Because it was well known that Israel had problems. So the question asked was, "Is this real or is this another one of these..."

KULICK: The process evolved with every [issue of the Human Rights Report]. At the outset the real debate was over whether there were such things as "extenuating circumstances" and to what degree should the report try to be subjective in addressing such extenuating circumstances. The bias in the human rights community, if you will, was very much against the use of extenuating circumstances. They wanted, as much as humanly possible, all of these reports to be based on essentially the same criteria and to reflect a uniform set of analyses that would each stand on its own merits as a statement of the truth in that particular country. [In their view] it was unacceptable to say, "They've been bad, but the guys next door are even worse," or, "Well, they may have been bad, but when you consider that the previous regime was incomparably worse, these guys look pretty good."

It was inevitable that those kinds of comparisons would influence the drafter. However, the point was to try to keep the reports as "clean, uniform, and objective" as possible. That can be done with relative dispassion if you're talking about Lesotho or Burma or Australia. Nobody really cares very much [about them]. But when you got to Israel, it mattered enormously, because, first, Israel was by far the largest recipient of United States aid and military assistance and political support out of all proportion to its strategic value or any of the other criteria normally applied to these kinds of positions. Secondly, most of that [aid and support] was based on the proposition that Israel was a democracy, Israel was "like us" in an area very alien and very hostile to our values. Therefore, Israel "deserved" all of this support, not because American Jews had an emotional attachment [to Israel] but because, objectively speaking, this was a country with which we had a great deal in common and whose support and security were a vital security interest of the United States.

Any report like this which undermined that proposition was clearly very threatening. A report which said that the Israelis torture people, blow up people's houses, and expel people without due process and so forth would be very damaging. All of those things happened [in Israel], to one degree or another. The question was how do you treat them? Do you minimize them, do you ignore them, do you describe them with extenuating circumstances? Particularly at the very beginning of this process it [required] an enormously delicate and painstaking effort.

The first drafts [of such reports] were generally produced [by the U. S. Embassy in the country concerned]. But they were nothing more than a first draft. They were not intended to be the final report, which was produced in the State Department. The draft that came in from [the Embassy] went to the country desk, I think, and perhaps also to the Bureau of Human Rights Affairs. Basically, it was the desk and the Human Rights Bureau that produced the draft which everyone else looked at. There was a big struggle between the Human Rights Bureau and the various desks.

Q: Who controlled that process?

KULICK: Obviously, the Human Rights Bureau would say, "Oh, the desks suffer from clientitis. They're going to make these things come out 'right.' Only we have the [necessary], lofty kind of objectivity." The desks said, "Oh, the hell with that. These are not just academic documents." That was the nexus of the struggle.

Q: We're talking about the Human Rights Bureau, a new organization under a "true believer," Pat Derian. Whom did you deal with and how did it work?

KULICK: You know, it's funny. I don't remember [the names of] the individuals involved.

Q: They allowed you to "play" with the draft first, before it [went any farther]? Perhaps the word "play" is the wrong one.

KULICK: Yes, sure, we wrote a lot of it. They were right. The draft that came from the Embassy did tend to tread too lightly on some of the less attractive aspects of the subject. But the version prepared by the desk was still looked upon by the Human Rights Bureau as far too indulgent, far too protective of the "client." This wasn't true just of Israel. This was true across the board, but without question the draft [prepared by the desk] was the version most closely looked at. When the report came out, the newspaper stories on the Human Rights Report led with a comment like, "Israel's human rights practices criticized," or, "Torture alleged," or something like that. That was the lead, even though there were 140-odd reports in the document. Anyhow, it was a real education in the interaction of domestic politics and foreign policy.

Q: Did you feel "heat" from the Assistant Secretaries of the Near Eastern and Human Rights Bureaus? Were they sort of fighting above you on this report?

KULICK: Yes. The real, "heavy" combat did not take place at the desk level.

Q: But you could see the tracer bullets. [Laughter]

KULICK: Yes. That's a good metaphor. They would come back to us. We would be told, "Rewrite this, rewrite that, or touch this up a little bit." I think that, ultimately, what came out was pretty good. It was truly a product of the clash of ideas and perspectives.

Q: And it really set the pattern for later on, not only for yours...

KULICK: One thing that I was responsible for was that the report that came back from the Embassy treated Israel and the Occupied Territories as a unit. I said, "The first thing you have to do is to split those apart, because there are two, radically different sets of premises here. Within Israel proper [the authorities] must be judged like any other country. Israel is a democracy, and clearly there can be no distinctions as to how it treats its citizens. On the other hand, the Occupied Territories are under military occupation, which, by its very nature, is not democratic." I said, "This inevitably involves human rights practices which would not pass muster in a democratic society."

We were successful in introducing that distinction, which, I think, holds even until now. The lead paragraph [of the Report] says that these are two different situations. I haven't read the report for several years. It has waxed and waned in its harshness, depending on the political climate between the U. S. and Israel.

Q: As you were sitting on this very touchy issue, did you find, at that time, a difference between the reporting from our Consulate General in Jerusalem and that of the Embassy?

KULICK: Oh, very much so. [It took some doing to manage] that because, as you know, the Consul General in Jerusalem does not report to the Ambassador [in Tel Aviv]. That and, I guess, Hong Kong, are the only consulates general that report directly to the Secretary of State. They are, to all intents and purposes, embassies by another name, in terms of their relationships with Washington. Of course, there was a constant struggle between the Consul General and the Ambassador in Tel Aviv over that. The Embassy always tries to assert more control or authority over the Consulate General. The Consulate General always insists that it is an independent post, not hostile to the Embassy, obviously, and desirous of a good, working relationship, but a post with a different constituency, perspective, and chain of command.

There were some zealots in the Consulate General. I would say they were unabashedly pro-Palestinian. "Pro-Palestinian" doesn't necessarily mean "anti-Israel," but in the case of these two individuals I'm thinking of they were both. Their reporting, of course, was a major factor in preparing the [human rights] report on the Occupied Territories. Of course, the Embassy weighed in very heavily on that, saying that you couldn't base the report on the [situation in] the Occupied Territories just on the basis of the reporting from the Consulate General in Jerusalem. The Embassy expressed-I think correctly-a major voice in that process.

There was one famous case of a young woman, a consular officer, Alexandra Johnson...

Q: She wound up on the front pages of the newspapers.

KULICK: Yes. Someone "leaked" a cable, which had the very euphonic number of "Jerusalem 1500" [Cable No. 1500 from the Consulate General in Jerusalem]. It was a cable about torture in the Occupied Territories. It became a major piece of "samizdat" in Palestinian circles. Everybody knew about it. In fact, she even wound up writing a book called, "Jerusalem 1500." She [later] left the Foreign Service. I don't know whether she leaked [the telegram] herself or whether somebody else leaked it. It became a very big stick which the "Israel bashers" [used] to try to discredit...

Q: Were you getting any outside pressure-one, from the "Israel bashers," and, two, from AIPAC [America-Israel Public Affairs Committee]? While the process was going on, particularly since this was the first issue [of the Human Rights Report] and would be setting the mold, all of the power groups on all sides must have been trying to weigh in to set the pattern.

KULICK: Yes, but not at my level. This was going on well above my pay grade. This would have been going on at the level of the Secretary of State or, certainly, the Assistant Secretary [of the Near Eastern Bureau]. It would filter down, but in general I very rarely got a note from anybody which I could attribute to "muscle" [being exercised] by one side or the other.

Q: What was your feeling about Israel's rule in the Occupied Territories? This was during the period of the Likud Government.

KULICK: Well, [I had mixed feelings.] Prime Minister Begin came into office midway through my tour on the Israel desk.

Q: Even so. Was there a change? How did you see this, looking at this very controversial situation as a Foreign Service Officer? How did you feel that the Israelis were dealing with Palestinian problems?

KULICK: I was devastated by Begin's victory. Going back to what I was saying before about my own, personal orientation on these issues, I regarded that as a disaster. Some 15 years later I haven't changed my mind at all. I think it was a disaster for Israel. I don't accept the notion, for example, that only Begin could have returned the Sinai [Desert area to Egypt]. I think that that's baloney, although that is the argument that people often make.

Clearly, there was a change in policy. Rabin and the Labor Government did try to "hold the line" on the settlements, although they allowed themselves to be manipulated, intimidated, and kind of worn down by the Right wing in the Occupied Territories in setting up these "guerrilla" settlements which were subsequently "legitimized." When Likud came into power, they blatantly reversed the policy of the Labor Government, which was to have established settlements in those portions of the Occupied Territories over which they felt, for security reasons, Israel had to maintain long term control. Labor had avoided establishing settlements in those areas which were thickly populated with Arabs. Under the Labor plan these areas would be returned to Arab sovereignty. Labor never accepted the idea that there would be a Palestinian state, but I think that all along the notion was that the Jordanians would come back and take over most of the land on the West Bank.

The policy of the Likud Government was antithetical to that. It sought to ensure that no segment of the Occupied Territories would [be without] Jewish settlements. [This would] make it impossible to partition the area in any way which would leave Jewish settlements out [of the consideration]. In other words, they wanted to put Jewish settlements all over the Occupied Territories, so that you would have a Bosnian type of situation. You couldn't partition the area without having to move people and thereby stirring up so much emotion that it would practically prevent it.

Q: Well, we're ready to start again.

KULICK: Let me start this phase by saying that [Prime Minister] Begin came to power just about halfway through my [period of service] on the [Israeli] desk. One of my duties during my assignment there was to help to prepare the new Ambassador, Sam Lewis, for his assignment to Tel Aviv. I made many of his arrangements. We got to be quite friendly, and just before he went out, he said that he'd like to have me come out to serve in the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] as a political officer. He was interested in building up the Hebrew-speaking component of the Embassy. Up until that point it had consisted of only one or two officers. I was thrilled at the idea, although I had a major struggle with my wife over it. I eventually accepted the Ambassador's offer and spent my last year [on the Israeli desk] getting ready to go out [to the Embassy in Tel Aviv].

Q: This was...

KULICK: The fall of 1977, which also happened to be the time of [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. This visit completely galvanized and captivated the imagination of everybody involved in the peace process and the Arab-Israeli issue. I said "peace process," but this term had not yet been invented. The Sadat visit really started the peace process.

Q: What impression did you have of Sadat at that time? What was the word in the corridors [at the State Department] about Sadat and Israel?

KULICK: Well, this man was a great visionary. Personally and single-handedly he shattered a stalemate that had lasted almost 30 years. There was nothing but the greatest of admiration for him. He was certainly an unorthodox kind of character. I mean, it goes without saying that the president of the largest Arab country who announces-and then promptly follows through on-a pledge to go to Jerusalem is extremely unorthodox. I recall at least one Foreign Service Officer grumbling about how he [Sadat] had "betrayed" the Arab cause. But there were very few people in the Foreign Service who had that unbalanced a sympathy for the Arab cause and saw [this development] in that way.

Q: I was in [South] Korea at the time. It was thrilling to feel that there might be some movement.

KULICK: I remember the day that he [Sadat] made his statement. At first everyone was convinced that it was some kind of trick, that he was engaged in some sort of rhetorical flourish. However, the Israelis, to their credit, [accepted it at face value]. Of course, later on it turned out that this was a kind of "put up job." It didn't come out of the blue. The Israelis had been talking with the Egyptians behind the scenes for six months or so. The Egyptians had already gotten certain commitments from the Israelis before Sadat made his announcement. But nobody else in the world knew that, and it seemed like a "bolt out of the blue." However, the Israelis said, "Yes, sure. Come ahead." At that time many people expected Sadat to find some excuse or put up some condition, such as, "Yes, I'll come, but..." or something like, "You'll have to commit yourselves to withdrawing from the Occupied Territories." But Sadat didn't do that. It was just an incredibly thrilling four or five days. From that point on the whole atmosphere changed completely, although it took nine months after that for the Camp David Agreement to be reached, because it turned out that "one visit to Jerusalem does not a peace agreement make." All of the intervening meetings, including the one at Leeds Castle [in England in 1978] simply could not [resolve the outstanding issues]. Imagine what's going on now. They talk and they talk and they talk.

Q: You're talking about Palestinian-Israeli...

KULICK: No, it was Egyptian.

Q: Yes, but I'm talking about what's going on today.

KULICK: Right, the post-Madrid Conference talks. The Palestinians were not involved in the [discussions that led up to the Camp David Agreement]. Just the Egyptians and the Israelis. But President Carter decided that these conversations were not going to [lead anywhere] unless he personally took responsibility for them, put the prestige of the American Presidency on the line, and took the enormous gamble of inviting Sadat and Begin to Camp David. Carter basically decided that he would not let them leave until an agreement was signed. I contended then and I continue to contend that Jimmy Carter is probably the most under-appreciated President of this century. Hopefully, history will rectify that view.

Q: Usually, it does.

KULICK: Yes, the "shade" of Harry Truman can attest to that. Without [such a commitment from President Carter] the [Camp David Agreement] would not have been reached. People forget that. After [the Agreement was signed], he still had to make a trip to the Middle East himself and personally shuttle between Tel Aviv and Cairo to [ensure] that the last few unresolved issues were settled. Anyhow, the whole tenor of the office and the policy process shifted after that and became much more focussed on the Sadat visit to Jerusalem to bring about a breakthrough in the peace process.

Then, of course, in March or April, 1978, the Israelis invaded Lebanon, and everybody was terrified...

Q: This was the first incursion...

KULICK: Operation "Litani."

Q: This wasn't the one which [took the Israeli Army] all the way to Beirut.

KULICK: No, no. I can't recall what was the immediate, precipitating cause [of the 1978 incursion]. Probably, some terrorist incident. At the time it was Israel's biggest incursion into Lebanon, but it only went up as far as the Litani River.

Q: Operation "Peace for Galilee" was in 1981 or...

KULICK: 1982. I think, to the credit of the United States, that we came down very hard on the Israelis [in 1978] and told them that this [kind of behavior] just wasn't "on" and that they had to get out. We could see that the whole peace process with Egypt was at stake. If we hadn't [taken the action that we did], [this whole process] could well have fallen apart. It was against that backdrop that I went off to Israel in the summer of 1978.

Q: The last question, before we move to [your assignment to] Israel, is what was the opinion of people who were dealing with [this issue], like King Hussein of Jordan? For a long time it was considered, as you mentioned before, that when push comes to shove, Jordan eventually might take over the West Bank and be a controlling factor in the peace process. How did we feel about him at that time?

KULICK: I think we pretty much felt about him the way we feel about him today. He is, first and foremost, a "survivor." Sometimes, I think, the man has more luck than brains, when you consider all of the "bad" decisions that he's made over the years. It's quite astonishing...

Q: That he's still around.

KULICK: But he just celebrated his 40th anniversary on the throne [of Jordan]. We looked on him as very useful, obviously, and extremely important to us. I think that there were doubts about his statesmanship and about his popularity in his own country.

"Black September," you may recall, took place in 1970, I think it was.

Q: I can't remember right now. I think that it was in the early 1970's. We can add this later.

KULICK: In any case he was always [considered to be] very shaky on the throne. There was always the fear that the Palestinians were somehow going to "get" to him. We were very much committed to keeping him around. I think that at that point we probably agreed with the Israeli view-in fact, I know that we agreed with the Israeli view-that the ultimate solution to the West Bank problem was for Jordan to take control of [that area] again. Of course, at that point [Jordan] had never renounced its claim to the West Bank. It was not until the late 1980's that King Hussein finally washed his hands of the West Bank-at least, legally speaking. So we saw him as the key to any Palestinian-Israeli settlement, because we were completely opposed to any idea of an independent Palestinian state. Yet, we were also opposed to the idea of perpetual, Israeli rule [of the Occupied Territories]. The only alternative to those [possibilities] was Jordanian control of the West Bank.

Q: We'll stop now and resume this interview at the point where you went out to Israel as a political officer.

KULICK: Yes.

Q: When did you go out?

KULICK: In August, 1978.

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Continuation of interview, unspecified date, 1993.

Q: Gil, we left you when you were [assigned] to the Political Section [in the Embassy in Tel Aviv], where you served from 1978 to 1981.

KULICK: That's right.

Q: What was the political situation [in Israel] at that time?

KULICK: I went at a very dramatic time. I believe that I went [to Tel Aviv] in August, 1978, which was a time of intense activity on the Arab-Israeli peace front. You will recall that President Sadat [of Egypt] had gone to Jerusalem in November, 1977, and made his famous and dramatic appeal to the Israeli people for peace. I was then on the Israel-American desk. I guess that we talked about that in an earlier part of this interview. I was on the desk when Sadat made his visit. That, of course, redrew the whole political map in the Middle East with a stroke, or certainly as far as the solid front against Israel which the Arabs had maintained up to that point. From November, 1977, and for the next few months there was a series of negotiations to try to convert President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem into a permanent peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. They had been "floundering," I would say, trying to find a formula which could bridge the gap.

There had been meetings in England, the most intensive and extensive of which was the meeting at Leeds Castle, I think, in April, May, or June, 1978. The "breakthrough" still eluded them. It was in August, 1978, that President Carter decided that it was going to require his personal intervention to break the logjam. The elements were there. Sadat had made his trip, and the Israelis had responded openly and warmly, but they were still too far apart to [reach agreement]. So President Carter invited Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat to Washington-to Camp David. I don't mean to go into all of the details of the Camp David [negotiations]. I wasn't there, but everybody knows that it was the real "watershed" in the history of the relations between Israel and its neighbors.

I was [serving in the Embassy] in Tel Aviv in September, 1978. I had just been there about a month when the [Camp David] Agreement was signed. Of course, it electrified [everyone in Israel]. The whole Camp David process had riveted the attention of everyone in Israel. When the announcement was finally made that an agreement had been reached, it was probably the most dramatic moment of my career, in terms of the political environment in which I was working.

Q: I think that one's senses are sharpest when you first get to a place. As you had come from the Israel Desk [in Washington], you were already sensitized. What was your impression of the reaction [in Israel], across the political spectrum, as far as the Camp David Agreement was concerned? Were people pretty favorable [to it]?

KULICK: You will recall that the negotiation was entered into and was conducted by a Right Wing government [in Israel]-by far the most conservative government that Israel had ever had. If this same negotiation had been carried out by the Labor Party, one could have expected massive opposition to it and, perhaps, "blood in the streets" and so forth. The fact that the [negotiations] were conducted by [Prime Minister] Begin and the Likud Party gave [the agreement] far more legitimacy with the [political] Right [in Israel] than would have been possible otherwise. You often hear the "Nixon to China" analogy used very loosely. I don't "buy" that, but it was that sort of motif, which explains why the Israeli Government was able to bring most of the people along. Certainly, there was a very Far Right faction which was much opposed to the Agreement. However, by and large, [the Agreement] was welcomed with open arms by the Israelis, because, I think, Egypt and the occupied Egyptian territory in the Sinai [Desert] played a very different role in the Israeli psyche than the territory of Palestine proper, that is, the West Bank and Gaza. Prime Minister Begin was able to reach an agreement which, in principle, and ultimately in practice, provided for the complete return of [the Sinai Desert] without evoking the kind of emotional response that we're now seeing in the negotiations with the Palestinians.

Q: And also the Golan Heights weren't looking down on [Israel].

KULICK: The Golan Heights weren't involved.

Q: Yes, so this was something that was, in a way, "out of sight."

KULICK: There was no emotional attachment to the Sinai. It was purely a security issue in the minds of all but a tiny handful of people in Israel.

Q: What areas did you cover as a political officer, at least to start with, and how did they develop? Then, how did you go about doing your work?

KULICK: I had several "portfolios." One of them was the whole question of the Occupied Territories, Israeli settlements and settlers, and human rights practices in the West Bank and Gaza. I was the person in the Embassy who wrote [the first draft of] the Human Rights Report. I visited the settlements and reported on Israeli settlement activity and so forth. I also handled the whole "international organization" account. So it was my responsibility to handle [all of our contacts] with the Israelis regarding UN resolutions and the UN system [as a whole]. As you know-at least it seemed to me at the time-most of the political work we did in the UN, in one way or the other, always ended up with Israel's position.

Q: It always seemed to end up that way.

KULICK: So it occupied an inordinately disproportionate amount of time, relative to the real significance of it. But we had to give it the time it demanded.

Finally, because I spoke fluent Hebrew and had lived in Israel before, I backed up the officer in the Political Section who dealt with Israeli domestic affairs. This meant primarily covering the Knesset and so forth. I was clearly being groomed to take over that position when he left, which I did, a year later, when my "portfolio" changed. I still followed the settlements, but someone else covered the UN, and I focussed almost exclusively on the domestic, political scene. I probably drafted two or three telegrams a day. The debate on the peace process occupied a fairly large part of my work, as well as Israeli reactions to various bilateral issues, and so forth.

When I went out to Tel Aviv, I don't think that my rank in the [Political Section] was specified, beyond the fact that I was an O-1. Most of the people in the Political Section were O-1's and O-2's. But about two months after I got there, the Political Counselor called me in and said that he was very dissatisfied with the person who had been designated as [his] deputy. He felt that [this person] wasn't competent to do the job. He didn't draft well at all and didn't have the contacts that I had. He said that he was going to designate me as his deputy. That made me a little uncomfortable because this other guy had come out [to Tel Aviv] with that assignment. He was, in fact, the Labor Attaché ½, as well, and was an FSO [Foreign Service Officer]. But I said that I was perfectly prepared to take on the job and I said that I hoped that [the Political Counselor] could do this in a way that wouldn't "poison" my relations with [the Labor Attaché ½]. The Political Counselor had no problem with that. He was a very tough...

Q: Who was the Political Counselor?

KULICK: Bob Blackwill, a man reputed for his heavy hand in dealing with colleagues. However, perhaps precisely because he was so tough-minded, I found that I learned a great deal from him.

Anyhow, the change was effected. The other guy, in effect, was demoted back down to his regular position as a political officer, and I was named Deputy Political Counselor. That was the role which I filled during [the rest] of the time I was there [in the Embassy in Tel Aviv].

Q: Let's talk a bit about the human rights issue. We've already talked about [how this issue was handled] in the Department. For Israel, more than anything else, [this issue] is extremely important politically. It's important domestically as well as in foreign [policy terms].

KULICK: It was as sensitive as it was important.

Q: All right, sensitive. Did you find that there was a difference in reporting on [this issue] in Israel than when you were back in Washington, putting together [the Israeli section of the annual Human Rights Report]? You had the West Bank [issues], you had allegations of mistreatment-maybe more than allegations...

KULICK: Of torture.

Q: Torture, and the whole business. The Israeli Defense Forces are not exactly a benevolent organization.

KULICK: But bear in mind that this was long before the "Intifada" [Palestinian uprising]. For the first, I would say, 15 years of the occupation, the Israeli occupation was, on the whole, a benign or a benevolent occupation. I accept the view of those who say that that is [somewhat of a contradiction in terms], because there is no such thing as a benign or benevolent occupation. Nevertheless, one can make relative comparisons to other kinds of military occupations. By those standards one would have to say that the Israeli occupation was a "relatively" benign [occupation]. That is to say, it was carried out with a minimum of brutality and a minimum of bloodshed. But having said that, I found that there were a lot of distasteful aspects to Israeli behavior [in the Occupied Territories].

However, the first thing that we did, when I wrote the [Israeli section of the] first Human Rights Report in 1976, was to divide the report into Israel itself and the Occupied Territories, making it quite clear that different circumstances obtained [in each area] and [that there was very] different behavior. Within Israel proper the behavior [of the police and security forces] could stand up pretty well against that of most Western democracies, although, given the kind of "siege" circumstances under which they lived. Even within the "Green Line" [Israel proper] there were practices to which we would not give a 100% bill of health. There was [the practice of] detention without trial and that sort of thing. They used coercive methods of interrogation, and so forth. But by and large [their practices] would stand up against the records of most Western political democracies.

In the Occupied Territories there was obviously a different situation. Again, the clear caveat at the beginning of all this is that a military occupation is not a democratic situation. The responsibility of the military there is to maintain their security. Within those [parameters] practices are-I don't wish to say "sanctioned" or "approved"-but "recognized" as necessary which would not be acceptable in a democratic kind of situation. The point that I always made was that these practices-and, again, I'm choosing my words carefully-can be "tolerated," though I wouldn't say "sanctioned"-only if the occupation is a temporary and transitional arrangement toward an evolution, at the end of which the people there are accorded some form of self-determination. If the military occupation, in fact, turns out to be a "permanent" state of affairs, then one cannot make those kinds of rationalizations. It then becomes a dictatorship or a tyrannical situation, rather than a less than perfect situation necessitated by the need to bring about a transition to democracy.

But the issue was controversial-within the Embassy and between the Embassy and the Consulate General in Jerusalem. There was always a running battle...

Q: Can you talk [a little more] about this? Part of what we're trying to do is to show the dynamics of the foreign policy apparatus. And this is one of the classic cases.

KULICK: Yes, it is. At its most fundamental level there was always a question of "Who's in charge?" in Jerusalem. Under our legal definition of "jurisdiction" applicable in the area, Jerusalem was not, formally speaking, part of Israel. It was a contested area, whose status had not yet been finally determined. Our Consul General in Jerusalem was not accredited to the Government of Israel, in any formal sense.

Q: Who was the Consul General then?

KULICK: When I was there [in Tel Aviv], there were two: Mike Newlin, who was later replaced by Brandon Grove. In the "Foreign Service List" [the post is not called] "Jerusalem, Israel." It is simply "Jerusalem." The consular stamp which we placed on people's visas and passports says, "Jerusalem." This is a matter of great sensitivity with the Israelis. The more sophisticated Israelis recognize this as a fact of life. Journalists were always bringing it up, and indignant American Jews and indignant Israelis would, from time to time, make an issue of this. But it was even controversial within the Department, in the sense that no one challenged the formal distinction between Jerusalem and Israel. However, there was naturally a [certain] level of tension between the Ambassador and the Consul General. It was all handled in Foreign Service terms. No one formally challenged the jurisdiction [of the Consulate General], but the Consulate General regarded itself-and no one would have ever acknowledged this-as a sort of "proto-Embassy" or "crypto-Embassy" to Palestine. Or at least certain individuals within the Consulate General [so regarded it]. I wouldn't say that that necessarily applied to the Consul General.

The Consul General had a very difficult job because he had to be on good terms with both [Israeli and Palestinian] communities. Everything he might do to ingratiate himself with one community-automatically and in a Newtonian kind of balance-would alienate the other guys. If he didn't get along with the Israelis, his life was going to be unpleasant. So we had two [office] buildings-one in East and one in West Jerusalem. We had two Christmas parties-one in East and one in West Jerusalem. The Consul General's residence and the main office building, if you will, were in West Jerusalem. But the Israelis consistently and always talked about the American Consulate in East Jerusalem as a way of driving home [their view] that we "tilted" toward the Palestinians.

You asked about human rights. This dichotomy was very clear in the way that human rights developments were reported. [One officer in] the Consulate General who was there when I was [in the Embassy in Tel Aviv] ended up by resigning from the Foreign Service and publishing a book about Israeli human rights practices.

Q: Who was that?

KULICK: Her name was Alexandra Johnson.

Q: I remember. She was on the front page of the newspapers at one point.

KULICK: Yes. She wrote a book called, "Jerusalem 1500," which happened to be the number of a telegram which she had drafted, a [cable which denounced] torture in Israeli prisons in the Occupied Territories. The cable was "leaked," and there was a huge "to do" about it. [In my personal view] she wasn't suited to the Foreign Service. She had clearly become very partisan and emotional on this issue.

However, when the Embassy reported on this issue, [it tended to be] from the perspective of the Embassy's "client," the Government of Israel. Well, any Foreign Service Officer will understand the situation automatically. [The Consulate General in] Jerusalem was reporting from the point of view of its "clients," the Palestinians. So this kind of thing went on all the time-on settlement activity, and so on. Whenever there was any question, the Consulate General would always [tend to] "tilt" on the side of exaggerating or highlighting the more damning version of the story as to what was going on at any particular time or place.

This [situation] also affected relationships between individual [Foreign Service Officers]. My counterpart in Jerusalem and I used to have a lot of arguments about it.

Q: I was wondering whether there was ever any effort made to "get together" and have lunch, because of what was almost built-in antagonism. [This kind of situation] sometimes happens between our Embassies in India [and] Pakistan. But here you were so close together.

KULICK: Well, [we saw] each other practically every day. It might be interesting [to discuss this further] for the purposes of this interview. The Embassy, of course, was in Tel Aviv. But as [the Israelis] didn't recognize it [Tel Aviv] as the capital [of Israel], [virtually] all of our [Embassy] business was carried out in Jerusalem. Sometimes, the Ambassador would literally make 10 trips a week [to Jerusalem]. He once said that he made three trips up and back between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in one day. The Ambassador's chauffeur [could drive along the road] almost in his sleep. He could make the trip in about 50 minutes. An average driver might take one hour and 10 minutes. But the Ambassador did a lot of his business in the car. He would dictate cables on his way back from Jerusalem. I was probably up in Jerusalem three or four times a week, for example], going to the Knesset or Parliament, which was my principal "beat."

It was a funny kind of "split" existence that we lived. [The Embassy] had a suite of rooms at the King David Hotel [in West Jerusalem to accommodate Embassy people] who were up there [in Jerusalem] late at night and didn't want to go back [to Tel Aviv]. We saw our colleagues [in the Consulate General] a fair amount. I would say that the relations on a personal level were really quite good. I mean that none of us took [this problem] so personally that it really interfered [with our duties]. However, on a professional level [it was different].

Q: When a cable would go out from [the Consulate General in] Jerusalem, presenting, you might say, "the dark side of the moon" regarding action on settlements or something like that, would you feel constrained [to comment in another cable] or would the Ambassador say, "Here, we've got to get [our view on record]?"

KULICK: It happened. Again, [you are putting it in] very stark terms. [We] didn't have sharp confrontations. One point on which [the Consulate General in] Jerusalem always stood very firmly was that they were not required to "clear" their reporting with the Embassy. On the other hand, a certain amount of discretion was required. When the [Consulate General in Jerusalem was] preparing a report to which they thought the Embassy might take exception, we'd get a "back channel" copy for comment. There was a pretty high degree of cooperation on these things. Obviously, the Consulate General would like to avoid a situation where they would send something in, and the Embassy would come back with a rocket which would say, "No, this is nonsense." Occasionally, the differences couldn't be negotiated out, and you'd have these two different versions. But, on the whole, it was all solved in a diplomatic kind of way.

Q: But you were both working with the thought that this could end up in the press very quickly, through leaks and so forth.

KULICK: Well, not usually, but it occasionally happened, as in the case of [the telegram known as] "Jerusalem 1500." In this case the officer in question had become so emotionally embroiled in all of this that, I think, she arranged to [get its text] into the press. But I think that most people were pretty professional about it.

I remember that on one occasion there was a visit by a Congressional Delegation. The Ambassador went up to Jerusalem to brief them. It was sort of a joint Consulate General-Embassy briefing. This may have happened more than once-I don't know. There was a younger officer at the Consulate General-not the woman in question, but another person-who challenged the Ambassador. The Ambassador said something to these Congressmen about something that was going on in the Occupied Territories on the West Bank. This [Consulate General] officer stood up and said, "No, that's not right, Mr. Ambassador." This guy was almost on the next plane out of town, but he managed to [resolve this] problem. I don't know whether this was just personal indiscretion or a surfeit of zeal or what. That was unusual. Usually, these things were kept within the family.

Q: How about on the Israeli side? Here you were, reporting on sensitive issues. Did you find that the Israelis were making an effort to "get to you" and make sure that "their" side [was heard]? If something happened on the West Bank which was brought to the attention of our Consulate General there, would some [Israeli] come and "work" on you and say, "Hey, this isn't really what happened" or something like that?

KULICK: We were rarely dealing with specific episodes or incidents. It was not a situation where there was a massacre or a big "shoot out" or something like that, and [the Israelis] would come and say, "Those guys shot first." It was much more a collective kind of reporting-on the general situation, rather than a specific incident. However, the Israelis in the Foreign Ministry, the Prime Minister's Office, and other places monitored very closely at least what came out in public in the U. S. They would go out of their way to correct the record, as they saw it, if necessary. I don't want to distort the picture. This was not the sole or even the primary focus of our [contacts] with the Israeli Government. What we've been talking about was my "beat." But we had eight political officers in an Embassy to a country of three million people. We had the same size Political Section that we had in Moscow or Tokyo. So you can imagine that there were very, very few aspects of Israeli political life that were not the subject of American Embassy interest.

Q: When I was in Italy, I used to think that at times we got too involved in political life there [and] that American interests, in reality, [were not fully considered]. You can step back, as it were, and wonder where, for example, the Israeli ship of state is going.

KULICK: We had no problem in maintaining perspective between the particular and the general. Sam Lewis was an outstanding Ambassador. He is a genius and a first-rate diplomat, in my opinion. He never lost sight, for a second, of where things were going. He certainly was the most effective Ambassador that I ever dealt with. I would guess that there were very few members of our profession as effective as he was in doing what he was sent out to do-though not always in a manner that pleased everybody. There were a lot of people who thought that he was much too close to [Prime Minister] Begin and too close to the Israelis. I thought that myself, sometimes, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I think that, whatever slightly excessive intimacy or excessive sympathy there may have been, it gave him an influence and an access that was absolutely unparalleled. That is, assuming that you use this access judiciously and when you really need it. Access counts for nothing if all it does is ingratiate you [with the government] and make you reluctant to come down hard when you have to.

[Ambassador Lewis] was a major player on the Israeli political scene. He used to be called the "Pro-Consul." He had a number of nicknames like that. He was a major figure on the social scene in Israel, too. A social event was not complete without Sam and Sally Lewis. He was preceded [in Tel Aviv] by Ambassador Malcolm Toon, for example, who was a disaster. I don't know if you know Toon. He was a very confrontational, very pugnacious sort. He thought that his job out there was to tell the Israelis how to suck eggs. They were having none of this at all. As a result, he may have gone to bed at night, thinking that he had stood up for America and told [the Israelis] where to get off, but as an Ambassador, he was useless. Lewis didn't pound his chest or pound the table, but neither did he simply roll over and act like a lap dog.

Q: I'm told by people who served in Tel Aviv that it is sort of a unique experience because you almost get "consumed." The political and social life is so active. Everything is an argument, but of a fascinating nature. You are intellectually engaged.

KULICK: No question about that. People would ask me, "What's it like to be [in Israel]?" I'd say, "Never a dull moment." They'd say, "Great," and I'd say, "No. I'd like a dull moment once in a while. I was there three years and I never had a dull moment." You need a dull moment. The pace is absolutely relentless. Again, I was there during the period between the Camp David Agreement, on the one end, and the evacuation of the Sinai on the other. This [period] was probably the most intense three years in Israeli political history. I suspect that during the "deep freeze" period, say, between about 1983, when the treaty was negotiated and the autonomy negotiations fizzled out, and about a year ago, when Rabin came in [as Prime Minister], the pace was probably somewhat more moderate. However, I doubt that it ever calmed down to what it would be like in a typical, European capital. You know, it's not for everybody, but I thrived on it. I must say that I had a particular, personal vocation for all of this. I'd lived in Israel as a student, I'd studied at the Hebrew University, I speak Hebrew, and I've had an intense involvement with Israel and with the whole Zionist enterprise since I was a kid. But at no point did it ever, I think, obscure my judgment about where U. S. interests lay, because my view of what needed to be done in Israel was virtually indistinguishable from the view of the U. S. Government. Therefore, I felt that I was doing the Lord's work by pushing the Israelis in the direction that they needed to go. Of course, a very large percentage of the Israeli people felt exactly the same way.

I used to be asked all the time, "What's it like, being a Jew in the [American] Embassy in Israel? Isn't it hard? Don't you find yourself torn by a conflict of interest, an emotional [tension]?" No, absolutely not, not for a minute. The only difficult part of it was watching the Israelis trying to figure out who I was and where I was coming from. But that was more amusing than troublesome, because I speak fluent Hebrew and I was intimately familiar with the situation and the players. I clearly was not dispassionate on the subject but I always had my eye on my mission as a Foreign Service Officer.

Q: Was any effort ever made to..."Compromise" is the wrong way to say it. Perhaps "co-opt" is the right word?

KULICK: Never. I was quite astonished, in fact. I picked up comments from various people, way over on the [Israeli] Right, who would refer to "house Jews" and that kind of stuff. You know, when Secretary of State Kissinger went out [to Israel], he got a lot of abuse from the [Israeli] Far Right. Someone held up a sign at the airport which said, "Jew Boy, Go Home." This was really vicious, defamatory kind of stuff. No, I think that people [in Israel] understood, however much they might disagree with my position on the issues. They knew where I was coming from. I think that, all in all, [being a Jew] was a tremendous asset for me.

I'm pretty sure that I referred to this in the previous segment of this interview, when I described how I happened to be assigned to the Israel desk [in the State Department]. But I described that several months ago and I don't recall exactly how I put it. At that time, when I went to talk about the job [on the Israel desk], it was against the tradition of 30 years. There was [a certain] "understanding" that [American] Jews were not assigned to Israel or even to work on Israeli affairs. I mentioned that that [tradition] was broken, as in the case of Kissinger's service as Secretary of State. In fact, Ambassador Sam Lewis viewed the presence of people who knew the language and were familiar with the country as a tremendous asset. In the eight-person Political Section in which I served at one time seven of the eight were Jews-or, at least, six persons plus one other whose wife was Jewish. Only the Political Counselor [was not Jewish]. In the case of Charles Hill he might as well [have been Jewish] in terms of his sentiments.

I found that, notwithstanding the puzzlement which my role there elicited, on the whole I was able to "break the ice" and establish relationships with Israelis that would have been hard for anyone else to do. I think that I had far more personal connections than anybody else in the Embassy, except for the Ambassador, who almost literally knew everybody in the country well. They were all his close, personal friends. I think that, in many ways, he thought of them that way. He was an extraordinary person.

In any case, in response to your question, there were absolutely no efforts made to "co-opt" me. I don't think that anybody [in Israel] really felt that that would be necessary. They didn't see me as an enemy, even though, as I say, I had a lot of very acrimonious arguments with Israelis, particularly [those] on the Right.

Q: I think that this [situation happens] quite often in other places where we've talked [about a similar situation]. For example, there are the Greek-Americans. For the professionals in the [Foreign Service] it's not a big issue. They're serving in a [given] country where they have [close family connections or ties of sympathy]. They know where their allegiance and interests lie. What often happens is that you have people who come out as "politicians" or people who are "super Greek" or "super Jewish" or something like that back in the United States. They come either for a very short time as political appointees or just as visitors and have a harder time seeing this. There are other countries like this. We are all "hyphenated" Americans.

KULICK: We have had Greek-American Ambassadors to Greece. We've never had a Jewish Ambassador to Israel.

Q: I'm not sure that this has worked very well.

KULICK: I know that we had Ambassador Sotirhos who, according to people who worked for him, was very, very effective, though they couldn't stand him. He was a real son of a bitch in dealing with his staff but apparently he got along famously with the Greeks.

Q: How about visiting delegations? The normal visiting delegation will come with a certain amount of history and "baggage," particularly in the case of a country like Israel-sort of with "stars in their eyes." They might resent somebody at the Embassy saying, "Yes, but it's not quite that way" or something like that.

KULICK: I didn't have much personal experience with things like that. Mercifully, I was spared dealing with visiting delegations. In fact, the best thing about my job was that I dealt exclusively with Israelis. I didn't deal with the Diplomatic Corps, I didn't deal with CODEL's [Congressional Delegations, and] I had relatively few dealings with other [U. S. Government] agencies there. I spent my time with Israelis. During a typical work day I didn't get out of the Embassy as much as I would have liked to, because the work load was so heavy. I used to spend most of my time in the Embassy-about 12 hours a day. We would routinely work 65 hour weeks. But nobody could find time [to do all that he wanted] because it was so absorbing and so exhilarating.

Q: How about spending time with your wife and your family?

KULICK: Well, to their credit, they loved being there [in Israel] so much, too, that they didn't mind my not being around. If [the Embassy in Tel Aviv] had been a place where having Dad at home was the only break from a day full of drudgery, boredom, or conflict with the surroundings, it would have been different. But I'd routinely leave home at 7:30 AM and get home at 7:30-8:00 PM, and work on Saturdays until 3:00-4:00 PM. Rarely did I get any flack. I could never have gotten away with that in Washington.

Q: Going now to your focus on the Knesset and [Israeli] personalities, how did we look at the Likud Party and particularly Begin, Sharon, and other figures-at least during your time there? What was your view of them?

KULICK: It was clear that these people weren't our "friends." It was clear to me. Ambassador Lewis always maintained a very statesmanlike neutrality. He never revealed his [feelings] on anything having to do with the Israeli Government. To this day I don't know what he thought of Menachem Begin. I'm sure he didn't like Arik Sharon-nobody could deal with that guy, without feeling [at least some] distaste for [him]. However, I would say that in my reporting I let [my feelings] "hang out" a bit more than most people did. However, I was not assigned there to indulge my tastes or ideology. I was there to report on what's going on, to analyze it, and to tell Washington what we ought to be doing about it. I would love to have served [in Israel] when there was a Labor Party Government in power, because, by contrast with the Likud Party, it must have felt like "hog heaven." On the other hand, no doubt, when you got down to specifics, before 1977 I'm sure that the Embassy found itself in a situation involving some [conflict]. Dealing with Israelis will always be that way because they will always push you as far as they can. Even your friends will try to push you beyond where you want to go. In a sense it's a little easier dealing with less friendly guys because you feel fewer conflicts about drawing the line.

I spent a lot of time at the Knesset. I had a pass to the Members' Dining room. I was one of only about 10 non-Israelis who had a standing pass. I could go in any time. I'd spend hours there, just gossiping and talking with guys-picking their brains. A lot of them saw me as a conduit to the Ambassador-at least the ones who didn't talk directly to him. If they had a direct tie to the Ambassador, they weren't interested in talking to me. But that involved [only] a few people at the top. I dealt primarily with "echelon one and a half," I guess. Q: How did this work out? You had this contact with a very active Parliament. However, in a practical sense, what did this mean as far as your reporting went? Were you just informing [the Department] or did it mean that you were trying to get something done?

KULICK: I spent a lot of time just arguing with these guys, trying to tell them what our policy was and what it wasn't, and why we took the positions that we did. This did not involve a conflict between Israel and the United States. With some people that's an exercise in utter futility. You can't convince someone who thinks that the United States is out to "do Israel in"-to destroy [the country] by stages-that you have anything in common. But for people who are a little more dispassionate, who can recognize that there may be tactical disagreements here within a general, strategic convergence of view, a conversation like that can be a lot of fun. You make some points. At the end of the day you may feel that you have enlightened people, perhaps opened their minds a bit, gotten them to think a little further about their positions. I wouldn't exaggerate this. It was not my principal role or that of anybody else in the Embassy. We were not there to "convert" Israelis. We were there, I think, in large measure, to make sure that they at least understand what our position was.

That's a big job. Views get distorted in the press and by people who don't like us and who exaggerate [these matters] to make them even more unpalatable. But it was a lot of fun, because these are great people.

Q: I would like to serve there because this sounds like fun.

KULICK: It was a political officer's dream. I know that when you serve in places like the former communist world, you spend all of your time, grasping for the most meager crumbs of information. You read "Pravda" and try to figure out why the comma is here [instead of there]. In Israel you were just inundated with information. You cannot possibly absorb all of it. There are six daily newspapers which you have to go through. If you don't speak Hebrew, you rely on the translation. I'm afraid that my reading knowledge of Hebrew was not so good that I could sit down and read all the newspapers. We had a three-person translation staff in the Political Section which did nothing but translate articles. I supervised them, [in addition to] my other duties.

There are three million [Israelis] whom you can talk to. And they'll all talk to you. They're all more than eager to get their views across [to you]. So there's no problem whatever about getting information. The problem is sorting it out and making sense out of it.

Q: Were there any major issues that you were trying to get across during this three-year period that you were there [in Israel]?

KULICK: The peace process was obviously the focal point of our whole relationship. Equally obviously, we were in it up to our necks. As I was the "point" person for domestic political [activities], I spent a great deal of time explaining why we advocated what we did and trying to get through some of the nuances of [this issue]. For example, explaining why we took the position we did on settlements and why we considered them an obstacle to peace. I wouldn't think that that would require a lot of explanation, but if your definition of "peace" is getting the Palestinians simply to roll over and accept permanent [Israeli] occupation, obviously, [our position] doesn't fit in with that conception.

We also tried to interpret what was going on in the Arab world. I didn't deal with that so much. That wasn't really my "beat," but I'd pick up a lot [of information] in the sense of the real intentions of the Syrians and Egyptians and why [the situation] is not as bad as [our contacts] seemed to think. Without sharing intelligence with them from Embassy reporting and elsewhere, you can pass on an awful lot of information that will fill in gaps in their understanding of what's going on in the Arab world.

Q: Did you find the Israeli media and the politicians well-informed about what really was happening? Did they have-I won't say "objective," because that's the wrong term. But did they have a relatively realistic idea of the dynamics of, say, Syria, Egypt, [and other Arab states]?

KULICK: There was a significant body of Israelis who were quite expert on the Arab world. They included scholars and journalists who read Arabic, who can listen to broadcasts in Arabic, and who can easily read [these statements with or without] translation. They have a relatively sophisticated understanding. But there were very few Israelis who knew this [situation] from the [point of view] of "understanding the enemy." And if that's your point of view, you have a built-in distortion. It's kind of like the Hubble [satellite] telescope. If you shave the mirror too thin, it's going to throw the focus off. Obviously, [these Arab countries] were their enemies, but not genetically programmed to be so, not implacably so, and ultimately people that they were going to have to deal with. So you had to "break through" that that preconception [that the Arabs were] people implacably opposed to their existence. You can understand the dynamic, but you may believe that their current plan is to destroy you, rather than that they need to reach some kind of reconciliation with you. I'm no expert on the Arab world and that wasn't one of my principal concerns. But, inevitably, I wound up spending a lot of time talking about things like that.

We haven't really talked about internal [Israeli politics], which is what I really concentrated on. I wasn't there to argue with them or tell them [what to do]. I was there to understand what was going on within the Israeli political structure, which was as fascinating as any internal political process that I can imagine. [Israel] had a full spectrum in its representative parliament that ran from communists to [people who were] practically neo-fascists. Perhaps "fascist" isn't really the right word, but they were an extremely hard-line, conservative faction that advocated, for example, the expulsion of all of the Arabs from the Occupied Territories. They were a fringe, just as the communists were a fringe. In the middle you had divisions along religious versus secular lines and, obviously, Arab versus Jew. And you also had splits within Israeli Jewry, not only between religious and non-religious but between Sephardis, people of North African and Middle Eastern origins, and Ashkenazis, people of European origins.

There was a very significant split, not so much on the major political issues but on domestic, social [matters] concerning the division of the "pie" and so forth. The Likud Party played that very effectively and really came to power, not so much because of its advocacy of a "hard line" toward the Arabs, but because it was able to convince a significant portion of the Sephardic, lower working class that they were being "screwed" by the European, Ashkenazi, oligarchic, upper class [Jews]. There were many efforts to manipulate class consciousness and ethnic [awareness]. It was a significant element in Israeli political life. It had nothing to do with attitudes toward the peace process. The tendency among diplomats and foreigners is to see everything from that point of view, because that was so important to us. Among other things, what I tried to do was to point out that there were a lot of other things going on which had nothing to do with the peace process. They had to do with how economic benefits are distributed, how the economy was organized, and the resentment of secular against religious [Jews] who played a disproportionately powerful role in political life because of the way the system is structured.

The [Israeli] Parliament was [elected under a process of] proportional representation. You needed only one percent [of the votes] to obtain representation in Parliament, so there were 15 [political] parties there at any given time. [As a result, there were] razor thin coalitions which were always dependent on the votes of these small, usually religious parties. They were essentially "for sale," usually to the highest bidder-the [coalition] that gave the religious [parties] the most influence over domestic life and the most money to run their institutions. They were very corrupt. It was a very corrupt system-not so much personally corrupt but institutionally corrupt. These were all things that were important for Washington to understand-how decisions are made there [in Israel]

Q: Did you make any headway in making contacts within the religious parties, or were they a little more difficult [to approach]?

KULICK: They were more difficult because they weren't interested in a lot of the issues that we were interested in. The issues [in which they were concerned] were far more parochial. They had a few, fairly sophisticated spokesmen. Well, they all played the "Knesset game" very well, but not in terms that related particularly to what was on our agenda regarding Israel. They didn't, by and large, care that much about the peace process. They'd go along with whichever party made them the best offer. Until 1977 that was "the Left," the Labor Party. After 1977, when the Likud emerged as the largest single party, the "line" of the religious parties moved sharply to the Right. That is not to say that that was the only reason. There has been a steady, Rightward drift in Israeli national life since the beginning [of the independence of Israel] in 1948. The parties that today are considered "centrist" were considered "Far Right" 50 years ago. The parties that are now on the "Left" were considered "centrist" parties way back then, when the "Left"...

Q: At the time [they sought] sort of a socialist utopia. How did you find that the Israeli Government worked?

KULICK: A would-be socialist utopia.

Q: Looking at it as an American, how did the [Israeli] Government work? How did they "deliver the goods" when you were there as far as social programs-food and all the things...

KULICK: You start off with the fact that Israel had a parliamentary, rather than a presidential system, so that the whole process by which decisions are made and goods are distributed is quite different from our system. I think that much more of [this process] went on in Parliament than would be the case here in the United States. The government, in any parliamentary system, is an extension of the majority party or coalition in the Parliament. And politics are much more personal than they are here, in dealing with a country of 3.5 million people. So you need to know the personal histories of a lot of these people to understand their relationships with other members of the government. Menachem Begin's aunt was [Arik] Sharon's "wet nurse," or something like that. There's not a whole lot of intermarriage in the sense you have in a dynastic monarchy. However, it was important to know the personal histories of these people. It took a lot of time to get to know them.

Q: Then you left [Israel] and just moved over a little to the South? You left [Tel Aviv] in 1981?

KULICK: No. I came back to Washington. [Tel Aviv] was my last overseas post [in the Foreign Service].

Q: I thought that you went out to the Sinai.

KULICK: No. I went to the unit [in the State Department] here in Washington that was setting up the multinational observer force, established [under the] Israel-Egypt peace treaty. This was a multinational [operation] outside the UN system because the UN, of course, completely rejected the Camp David Agreement and would not or could not provide a peacekeeping force. However, one of the conditions that the Israelis insisted on was that there be a kind of multinational force out there in the Sinai to monitor Egyptian activities and serve as a "trip wire." So the U. S. took it on itself to organize such a force, which we did. I volunteered to serve in the group that was putting this force together, frankly because I hoped to stay in Israel-an option which I had failed to exercise at the time that I should have and which I could have done, at the end of my second year [in Tel Aviv].

But at that point my wife was very eager to get back to the United States. We weren't too happy with our son's schooling. However, by the end of the third year [in Tel Aviv] we had changed our minds. But it was really too late to stay on in my Embassy position. I saw this Sinai possibility as a way of staying there. Anyhow, I did get involved in that group, but all of the work was done back here in Washington.

Q: I know that time is moving on. This is almost a parenthesis to [your assignment to] the Italian desk.

KULICK: I was [on the Sinai planning group] for close to a year. I should say, just to put the cap on the Israeli segment of my career, that in the summer of 1982 I went back out to the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] for about four weeks on TDY [temporary duty]. Again, this was my wife's idea. [She said], why not offer myself to the Embassy as a utility person?. The war in Lebanon had broken out. I knew that the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] would be "stretched," with transitions between assignments and so forth. So I prevailed on Ambassador Sam Lewis to bring me out there. The Embassy gave me an [airline] ticket. I found my own housing. I "house sat" for somebody who was on R&R [Rest and Recreation]. I spent a month at the Embassy, reporting on Lebanon, etc.

Q: What impact did [your period of TDY at the Embassy in Tel Aviv] have?

KULICK: You mean, [because I came back]?

Q: No, not that. I'm talking about dealing with [the war in Lebanon] during the time you were there [on TDY]. What was the feeling in our Embassy [in Tel Aviv] regarding this movement into Lebanon?

KULICK: Very negative. That was one of the points that came out. However, ironically, a lot of people believed-myself included-that the only reason that the Israelis invaded Lebanon in 1982 was because they got "a wink and a nod" from [then Secretary of State] Al Haig. He has consistently denied this, and it's not written down anywhere. However, I have no doubt that they [the Israelis] looked at Haig and considered what he had to say and concluded that they could do this.

Q: I had an interview with [Ambassador] Nick Veliotis, who said that they weren't sure-I mean, that NEA [the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs]-wasn't sure [about Haig's role]. They [got in touch with then Israeli Defense Minister] Sharon and said, "Well, now, listen here." [Veliotis] wasn't sure what Haig had said to him [Sharon] and tried to persuade Sharon that we were not receptive to that type of action [the Israeli move into Lebanon]. Of course, if you're somebody like Sharon, you hear what you want to hear.

KULICK: Absolutely.

Q: I think that Haig had probably, as one military man to another, sort of said, "Well, I can understand..."

KULICK: Yes. I'm not saying that I'm certain that Haig did this with the full cognizance [of President Reagan], but I have no doubt that Sharon, at least, interpreted Haig-and I personally think that he interpreted him correctly-as saying, "Boy, you've got a real mess there. Somebody's got to clean it up."

Q: Yes. Well, anyway, this was not a glorious time for the Embassy [in Tel Aviv].

KULICK: No, it was a period of great tension between Israel and the United States. Well, you know, they [the Israeli Defense Forces] were at the gates of Beirut. I guess that we probably came down on them as hard, at that point, as we had at any time since 1976, when we forced them out of Sinai. However, Ambassador Sam Lewis had the standing and the access and the trust to be able to handle that without any great [damage] to [Israeli-American] relations.

The Italian desk was something that I sought out. I love Italy and thought that this would lead to an [Italian] assignment, hopefully in Rome. The Country Director said that they'd been looking for someone who spoke Italian. I said, "Look, this assignment that I'm in now is winding up early. I have 10 weeks or so [in hand]. I'll go to the FSI and study Italian." The Country Director said, "Oh, what can you do in 10 weeks?" I replied, "Look, trust me. I can learn Italian in 10 weeks." And I tested at the 3 [Speaking] and 3 [Reading] level after 10 weeks. Unfortunately, I've lost most of my Italian [since then]. What you learn at that pace doesn't stay with you, unless you really use it. And I haven't had much opportunity to use it.

However, I went onto the Italian desk and then immediately said, "Hey, Ambassador Sam Lewis wants me to come out to Tel Aviv." The [Italian desk] wasn't too happy about that, but I said that it was kind of a prior arrangement. Anyway, I came back and really enjoyed what I was doing on the Italian desk.

However, one day I got a telephone call from Charley Hill, asking me to come up and talk to him about something the Secretary wanted me to do, or what he told me that the Secretary wanted me to do: be a speech writer. I said, "I don't really think so." He said, in effect, "This is an offer that you can't refuse." What particularly struck me about that "offer" was that I had been offered the same job when William D. Rogers was Secretary of State some years before, when I had come back from my first assignment in Ethiopia. I'd resisted [the assignment] then and turned it down, because I was working on environmental affairs, something that I really was very much interested in. I was a little afraid of taking on a speech writing job. This time, the second time around, my wife said to me, "Look, you don't really want to run away from this. It's a challenge, but you ought to take it."

So, although I had no desire to leave the Office of Western European Affairs, I took the job. It was the biggest mistake that I made in my entire career. I should have listened to my inner voice, because it was not the right assignment for me. I proved [to myself] what I had suspected all along: I just don't fit into that kind of isolated, intellectual environment. I'm really an "operator" and not just a "thinker." I need to be out there making things happen. They liked what I wrote, and it was well received. However, it was absolute hell for me for two years. And Secretary Shultz is a very difficult person to work for, because he's a Sphinx: he never tells you what he wants.

Q: He's sort of a stone face.

KULICK: He'd say, "Write me a speech on [nuclear] non-proliferation." I'd say, "Well, what about it?" And he'd say, "Send me [a draft] and I'll tell you if this is what I want."

I learned a lot but I did not enjoy it at all. In fact, at one point I went to the Director of Policy Planning and I said, "Please, let me get out of this job." And he said, "Well, if you can find another job, go ahead." So, actually, I found myself a job in H...

Q: H is the Bureau of Congressional Relations.

KULICK: In the Middle Eastern job there. I thought that this was going to be a lot of fun. But then I was told that when Congress was in session, I'd better forget about seeing my family. I'd be there until midnight every night. I took [that news] home with me. [Laughter] You asked the question earlier. That was an extremely difficult scene. So I kind of tucked my tail between my legs and went back and said, "On second thought, this isn't something that I want to do." I should have said to all concerned, "However much this may discomfort you, I can't go back to speech writing." But I did go back and did it for another year. And I survived.

I'm proud of what I wrote. I wrote speeches on subjects that I knew nothing whatever about when I started out. But by the time I finished, I had a fair amount of knowledge about things like non-proliferation and even on economics, about which I'm a total ignoramus. But I can string words together reasonably well. I had very little contact with Secretary Shultz. I only saw him, face to face, about five times during this whole period. Peter Rodman, who was Director of Policy Planning, was, in fact, chief speech writer [for the Secretary], although it didn't appear in the title on the door [of his office]. In fact, he had the last word on speeches. A few, minor things were pretty much completely mine, but on the really big speeches Peter had a major impact. I did that for two years, finishing up in February, 1985.

For the first time in my career I found myself without an onward assignment, midway between assignment cycles. So I went to the Board of Examiners, which is a traditional kind of perch...

Q: It's a parking place but it's interesting.

KULICK: It was very interesting.

Q: I did it for a year and enjoyed it.

KULICK: I went in there, thinking that it would be a year or a year and a quarter. I made one field trip out to Atlanta where we [administered] all of the exams for three or four weeks.

Then I found out about a job in IO, [the Bureau of] International Organization Affairs, in UN Political Affairs [UNP]. The position of Deputy Director [of UNP] was open there. That appealed to me a great deal. I'd always been interested in UN affairs. I think that this was still before the period of "open assignments." I went down and talked to the Office Director. He said, "Do you want the job?" I said, "Sure." I [took over the] job in April, 1985, as one of two deputy directors in a 12-person office. I covered Africa, Latin America (about which I knew nothing), the Middle East, peacekeeping, and multilateral arms control. [The latter] was a complete waste of time. There were meaningful discussions going on in the bilateral U. S.-Soviet context, but there are various, miscellaneous things that the UN putters around with in the field of arms control, frankly just to give some countries...

Q: Something to do.

KULICK: I guess that the chemical weapons treaty was the one multilateral treaty that attracted some real attention in the United Nations.

But that was a lot of fun. I enjoyed that. I got involved in peacekeeping issues concerning the Golan Heights, in Cyprus, and then, of course, in Lebanon in connection with the UN Force in Lebanon. The Lebanon [question] really involved the domestic politics of [that country], trying to persuade Congress that this was something that we needed to do. [We also had a hassle with the people in [the U. S. Mission to the UN] in New York about what our assessment was and what their terms of reference were, rules of engagement, and all that sort of thing.

The project there which I most enjoyed, on which I had the most personal autonomy, was the effort to get the United Nations to open the war crimes archive, which had lain moldering untouched in a warehouse somewhere in Long Island for 40 years. No one had even known about it. There were literally millions of documents which [the UN] had inherited from the [international] tribunal which had conducted the Nuremberg trials. After the Nuremberg trials were over, the records were all turned over to the UN. Well, there was the Berlin Documentation Center, which had...

Q: Actually, [the Berlin Documentation Center] took over the Nazi records...

KULICK: And the UN took over the Nuremberg Tribunal records. Then, somehow, just by accident, somebody stumbled on these things. Stories had begun to come out about [Kurt] Waldheim [Austrian Foreign Minister, then UN Secretary General, and then President of Austria] and his activities during World War II. The searchers had stumbled onto these archives and found vast, untapped resources that had never [been looked at]. They were supposedly there for law enforcement purposes, but nobody was pursuing war criminals at that point. Anyhow, a clamor arose about the fact that these documents were there, but nobody had access to them. There was a lot of pressure from Congress. Naturally, some Congressmen wanted to hold up our UN contribution-in other words, to make it a hostage to [someone's] private agenda. Together with USUN [United States Mission to the United Nations] I negotiated a system whereby these documents, for all intents and purposes, were opened to the public. They were [theoretically] limited to law enforcement agencies, legitimate scholars, universities, and so forth, but the categories were broad enough to cover anybody. Basically, you had to get a "permission slip" from USUN. And USUN was told that, unless the applicant comes in representing some scandal sheet, they should err on the side of generosity [in issuing these slips].

I enjoyed doing that. I frankly don't know what has resulted from it. The concerns that were expressed were that these [documents] would be misused. There is a lot of mistaken, raw, unevaluated intelligence in [those files]-including unsubstantiated allegations made against people. Anybody [whose name is mentioned in those files] is open to abuse, their lives could be ruined, and their reputations could be besmirched because of some possibly bogus information [in them]. I haven't heard that that has happened but I haven't heard that anything has happened [at all]. Maybe people were more concerned about establishing the principle [of access] than they were actually to do anything with [the documents].

I have seen that the Office of Special Investigations of the Department of Justice actually has used those files, but I haven't heard about any improper use of them. However, after the Damjanjuk fiasco no one should necessarily take that for granted.

We could talk a lot about the UN, but I should say that this was a period of a real ebb in our relations with the United Nations.

Q: I was going to ask whether the Reagan administration, particularly at that time...

KULICK: It was the depths of our antipathetic relations with the United Nations. [Jeane] Kirkpatrick [former U. S. Ambassador to the UN] was a died in the wool UN hater, however she may have clothed her rhetoric. I think that, finally, they [the Reagan administration] were just out to discredit the United Nations. That is not to say that there were not a lot of things going on there which cast discredit on the United Nations. The UN had been allowed to sink into a pit of what we would now call "international political correctness" and [become] a cesspool of anti-Western, anti-Israeli [attitudes], bordering on the anti-Semitic. [The UN] needed a good shaking up. If the Reagan administration went too far in the other direction, who knows, in the long sweep of history that [may have been] an inevitable reaction toward some kind of synthesis. I don't know. I found it very distasteful. What was so ironic was that everyone I worked with below the political level felt exactly the same way. It was kind of a case of the "professionals" against the "politicos" in an almost classical kind of way.

The Assistant Secretary [in IO] was Alan Keys, a very provocatively Right wing kind of character-very articulate and extremely bright but, I think, a kind of malign character because he used all of this demagoguery...

Q: Isn't he fairly young? I heard people [comment about him] when he first came in. He gave long lectures, almost monologues, and harangues. People were saying, "My God!" He didn't convince anybody.

KULICK: No, he really didn't. I suspect that he didn't mind. I had the feeling that he would rather hear the sound of his own voice than almost anything else. He had been one of Kirkpatrick's deputies in New York. At that point, of course, it was New York against Washington and a more or less constant attack against the bureaucracy. When Keys came down [to Washington], [Vernon] "Dick" Walters was assigned to New York as Ambassador. He was a much more low key, "good old boy." Things were suddenly turned around, and it was Washington backing New York all the way.

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Q: Today is March 29, 1994. Gil, we were talking about the United Nations. You were in IO?

KULICK: Yes, IO/UNP [Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Office of UN Political Affairs].

Q: You were discussing Alan Keys. Could you talk about your impression of Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick? She was the Ambassador to the UN while you were there [in IO/UNP], wasn't she?

KULICK: She was there for part of the time and then Dick Walters was there for part of the time. I'm not sure of the transition point. I worked with Walters when I was in the Office of Southern African Affairs.

Q: Let's finish off on the UN side before we consider Southern Africa. What was your impression-and perhaps that of the people around you in IO-of Jeane Kirkpatrick? She came in with [her own] agenda, which, I suppose, you could describe as "Right wing"? I'm not sure that that is quite accurate.

KULICK: As you know, she was a so-called "Jackson Democrat" when she started out.

Q: You're referring to "Scoop" Jackson, Democratic Senator from Washington?

KULICK: That's right. In other words, she was [among those people] whose basic orientation was anti-communist. They regarded themselves as sort of "muscular Democrats" on foreign policy. The reason that they were Democrats was that, on the whole, they tended to have a fairly liberal, domestic orientation, a social democratic, domestic orientation, but were very "hawkish" on foreign policy. You know, [this faction] was started by a lot of people like Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz. Frankly, my explanation was always that their spokesmen were always heavily Jewish, with a Zionist background. I think that they came [to this position] out of a recognition that strong support for Israel required a very vigorous, assertive American foreign policy. Yet they had come from socialist backgrounds, with strong social democratic values. So you got this kind of blend of liberal, domestic views, and quite conservative, international views. Gradually, their domestic views shifted over to accommodate their international views.

Q: As a group they've probably been in greater proximity to the communists, as far as fighting them on the ground is concerned. Often the social democratic group is the most anti-communist, because they had been in the trenches, fighting them.

KULICK: Right, but that didn't reflect itself in a conservative, social agenda, at least initially. They more or less held on to their social democratic values but coupled them with a strong, forward-leaning, anti-communist [stance]. "Scoop" Jackson didn't come out of that background at all but he exemplified the combination of values that they subscribed to. They sort of coalesced around him. Gradually, they more or less shed their old, Democratic skin and reemerged as Republicans. Jeane Kirkpatrick didn't join the Republican Party until three or four years after Reagan came into office or even [later than that]. It was regarded as a great event when she came to terms with the fact that she really wasn't a Democrat any more. Of course, the explanation was always, "We didn't abandon the Democrats. The Democrats abandoned us."

However, as far as attitudes toward her and those like her are concerned, I think that, in general, there was a fairly clear split along political/career lines. By and large the career people had little sympathy for that philosophy. You know the views which I have expressed [previously in this interview]. I think that Foreign Service Officers, by and large, tend to have a liberal world view simply because they live in the real world and understand that it's far more complex than the kind of [simplistic attitudes] which, I think, conservatives like to hide behind. But that's obviously a very personal bias.

As far as the view of Kirkpatrick was concerned, the Bureau [of International Organization Affairs] was fairly well staffed with political appointees, because they were relied upon to reflect that point of view. But there always was a certain tension between them and the career people who, I think, had a more appreciative view of the potential of the UN. Not "mushy headed" and not "One World" [in outlook] but recognizing that we couldn't do everything ourselves and that we needed the UN as a forum for talking with people whom we really couldn't talk to in any other context. Anyhow, that's my view.

Speaking personally, I think that her [Jeane Kirkpatrick's] ultimate agenda was to discredit the United Nations because, I think, she personally regarded it somehow as a tool of the Soviets and fundamentally opposed to U. S. interests. Certainly, she was tied in with this whole group of neo-conservatives. I hadn't used that term before, but that was the umbrella under which they all operated. I think that the patently hostile attitude of most of UN members and UN decisions toward Israel very definitely influenced that point of view.

Q: Israel was always under fire in the United Nations.

KULICK: You know, [these neo-conservatives] were right. The UN was very hostile to Israel, but [in my view] that's no reason to abolish the United Nations. It's a reason to stick with it and, over time, I think, [to improve it]. It would be interesting to hear from her how she looks back on that time. She will probably take credit for having "reformed" the United Nations, or at least "purged it" of a lot of radical, "Third World" kind of excesses which it indulged in. In fact, I think that neither she nor anyone else had anything to do with that at all. [Rather], it had to do with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the general corruption of that whole system which imploded of its own weight.

Having said that, I do think that it was important for us to draw some lines in the UN and make it clear that, however much we believed in the institution, we could not continue to support the kinds of rhetorical excesses that went on there, as well as the management excesses which turned one [UN] agency after another into instruments of the "Third World" ideological agenda. I haven't reached a balanced view [on this matter] myself. Of late I've become quite involved in the Bosnian question. I'm extremely pleased to see that Kirkpatrick has taken a very vigorous stand on that issue. I would not necessarily have predicted this from her posture when she was Ambassador to the UN or even necessarily from her other views on foreign policy. All of this is kind of academic, because I had no personal dealings with her, anyway.

Q: I was just wondering. Was it the feeling in IO that she was effective or not effective, as far as the policy at that time [was concerned]?

KULICK: Oh, I think that she was quite effective in implementing the policy that she was given to carry out. Sure. No, I don't think that there's any question about that. The debate was over the policy itself and not whether she was an effective spokesperson and advocate for it.

Q: Did you find that the USUN staff looked at IO-or at least the Foreign Service contingent within it-as almost "the enemy"?

KULICK: At USUN?

Q: Yes.

KULICK: Well, USUN was staffed with Foreign Service Officers also. You had this dichotomy both in New York as well as in Washington. Now, USUN in New York was run by the Ambassador, and she used the Mission largely to promote her own agenda, but there were certainly people in the Mission who were not 100% sympathetic with her. They would commiserate with those of us in Washington who felt the same way. Also, Kirkpatrick, during the early part of her tenure [at USUN] had a very weak counterpart in Washington, Greg Newell [Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs], who was quite ineffectual. And I think that that was by design. I think that when she took the job in New York, she made sure that her counterpart in IO was somebody who would give her no trouble. And that certainly was what she got.

Then, when she left [USUN], Alan Keys, who was her deputy, came to Washington and effectively shifted the whole locus of that ideological juggernaut from New York to Washington. She was replaced in New York by Ambassador Vernon Walters, who was no ideologue by any means. So the whole ideological intensity shifted to Washington. Previously, [USUN in] New York kind of "drove" the policy. When Alan Keys came down here, Washington "drove" the policy.

Q: Then you moved to the Office of Southern African Affairs?

KULICK: I moved to [the position of] Deputy Director in the Office of Southern African Affairs in the summer of 1987.

Q: What did Southern Africa include?

KULICK: Southern Africa is everything South of the border between Tanzania and Mozambique. It goes right across the continent. So it includes Mozambique; Angola; the three former countries of the British Central African Federation, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi; South Africa; Namibia; and the three small, former British colonies of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland-10 countries altogether.

Q: What were your principal concerns?

KULICK: There were two Deputy Directors in the office: myself and, at first, Larry Napper. The Director was Gib Landford. I had the "Southern Tier"-basically South Africa, the "BLS" countries [Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland], and Namibia. Larry had the "Northern Tier"-the two former Portuguese colonies [Mozambique and Angola] and the three former countries of the British Central African Federation [Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi].

This was a pretty logical division because he [Larry] was concerned with the war in Angola, which was by far the principal preoccupation of the "Northern Tier," and, to a lesser extent, the war in Mozambique. Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi caused few problems but were closely tied in with what was going on in Angola and Mozambique. I dealt with South Africa, Namibia, and the three "BLS" countries.

Our principal concerns were overwhelmingly dominated by South Africa itself, not surprisingly. The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (the CAAA) had been enacted in 1986, the year before I was assigned to the Office of Southern African Affairs. This [legislation] mandated a comprehensive [group of] sanctions against South Africa. Our office was responsible for seeing to it that [the sanctions] were implemented, although that responsibility was divided between us, the Department of Commerce, and the Treasury Department also. We had the political responsibility for ensuring [compliance]. For example, our office issued an annual report on compliance with sanctions and specifically how American companies were complying with the requirements of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in terms of ensuring equal employment opportunity, job training, resistance to apartheid in the work place, and all of that sort of thing.

We also dealt with many American companies which were trying to decide whether they should stay [in South Africa] or withdraw. In other words, what were the trade opportunities, what were the political considerations, and so forth?

Of course, South Africa was engaged in a pretty aggressive campaign to destabilize its neighbors. So we were constantly "locking horns" with them over raids into Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and so forth, as well as the excesses of apartheid within South Africa itself and the human rights dimension of all that. I [joined the office] just before the turning point, when it began to become clear that things were going to change in South Africa. Unfortunately, I wasn't there for the election when De Klerk came to power. That [occurred] a few months after I left. However, it was pretty clear that they [the South African whites saw] the handwriting on the wall and [understood] that apartheid was doomed [to be considered] as nothing more than a [worn-out] system for the oppression of blacks. It was now going to be formally abolished or so heavily revised that it would no longer be apartheid. I don't think that any of us were quite visionary enough-I wasn't, at least-to believe that six months after I left the office Nelson Mandela would be released from prison and that, four years later, there would be an all-races election and a new constitution. The old South Africa would be gone.

But it was clear that it was heading that way. Sanctions were really starting to bite. I personally had real doubts about the efficacy of sanctions. I had done a kind of 180 degree turn on that question a year or so before, because I made a false comparison, based on my experience in Israel, having seen how Israelis reacted when put under that kind of pressure. There was the concept of a "laager" mentality. My assumption was that the Afrikaners, or white South Africans in general, would react that way-perhaps even more so. In the case of Israel, what was being demanded of them was not to go out of existence but to take chances with their definition of security and to abandon a certain, grandiose vision of their territorial and historical destiny. What the white South Africans were being asked to do was, in effect, to give up their whole social and political structure. The demand was that they accept majority rule and, in effect, live as a minority. My assumption was that they would never do that under external pressure, under the pressure of sanctions. [I felt that] the pressure would only drive them deeper into the "laager" and that the only way that things were going to change would be for rising prosperity somehow to erode the structures of apartheid. It was clear that, structurally, that system was not workable, if [South African whites] wanted to maintain a high standard of living and [to have] continuing economic growth.

Well, I think that I was wrong.

Q: At that point [the Bureau of] African Affairs was being run by whom?

KULICK: By Chester A. Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. He held that position throughout the entire eight years of the Reagan administration.

Q: He had a continuing policy of...

KULICK: "Constructive engagement." The term was coined in an article that he wrote for "Foreign Affairs" in 1980. It was basically the article that got him his job. I think that the term "constructive engagement" is a very accurate and descriptive term for his philosophy, which was that, essentially, disengaging from South Africa via sanctions and other routes would not [be successful]. This was the view which I was describing earlier in the interview. Disengaging from South Africa would not change the situation. This could only be changed by embracing [the country] and, in effect, "flooding" it with American investment and business, albeit with a requirement that these American business firms exemplify and embody American principles and so forth, [on the assumption] that, both by example and by virtue of increasing prosperity, change in South Africa would be brought about.

During most of this period Crocker's agenda involved getting a settlement in Namibia. This is something which, he believed, could be done. He didn't think that we could "abolish" apartheid in our time-or his time, anyway. But he did think-ultimately correctly-that South Africa could be induced to withdraw from Namibia and that Namibia could be brought to independence, in accordance with the UN resolution passed in 1975. In effect, this resolution terminated South Africa's legal right to be in Namibia and mandated that Namibia should become independent, effective immediately. The philosophy [underlying this UN resolution] was that you have to work with the South Africans. They're there primarily for security reasons-or, at least, that is an argument which they make and which has some validity, particularly when Angola, to the North, was full of Cubans and Russians. [Crocker's] approach was that by getting the Cubans to pull out of Angola we could then demand that the South Africans pull out of Namibia-a symmetrical kind of arrangement, whereby Namibia would become a neutral "buffer" between two, non-hostile states. His view had been that, were South Africa to withdraw from Namibia while the Cubans, in effect, were running Angola, the Cubans would then overrun Namibia, and the South Africans would wake up having an outpost of the Soviet Union on their northern border. That is an oversimplification, but that was essentially his view.

So [Crocker] devoted most of his energy to this. He didn't focus on Namibia per say. He said that that would happen of its own accord, once the Angolan "knot" was untied. So most of his efforts were devoted to working out an agreement between us and the Russians, for all intents and purposes, to get the Cubans out of Angola. At that time the Russians already recognized that Angola was a "wasting" asset and that they were getting nothing out of being there. Therefore, the [Russians'] proxies, the Cubans, did not benefit them by being there. [The problem with this analysis was that], by this point, the Cubans were no longer the proxies of the Russians. They were there in their own right. I don't think that the Russians were putting very much money into [Angola] at all. And the Russians wanted "out" of there. They weren't getting too much out of it, so there was a convergence of interest with the United States to try to resolve this [problem], so that "the Russians" could get out "honorably," rather than being seen to cut and run, leaving Angola to [Jonas] Savimbi.

Crocker had a very good, working relationship with the Russians. This was probably the first example of a real convergence [of interest] between us. The same is true of the Cubans. I'm telling you this, although I didn't work on that aspect. I observed it. I sort of "backed him up" when the field of focus moved over to Namibia, once the Angola issue looked as if it was pretty close to [being] a "done deal."

In fact, I spent a good deal of my time working with the UN in getting their transition assistance group into Namibia to start the clock rolling toward the year of transition to independence. I spent a lot of time working on logistics with the UN, arranging for "troop lift" and that kind of thing, [and] negotiating with the South Africans on the terms of their withdrawal. That went surprisingly easily. Crocker was right. Once [the] Angolan [problem] was settled-but it turned out that it wasn't settled at all.

Q: It's still going on today.

KULICK: And much worse than it was, but without the Cubans. It's a sad but inescapable reality that, once the Cubans were out of there, nobody gave a damn. The Angolans are slaughtering each other and starving people, but that's just not on our radar scope.

Namibia, on the other hand, is a quiet success story. It's now been three or four years since it became independent, and it seems to be working. The economy is holding [together] quite successfully, and the white population that provides the capital and economic know-how has not "cut and run" but stayed in place. The economy is being "Africanized." Namibia [was able to arrange] for the return of Walvis Bay from South Africa without a peep, once the South Africans made it clear that South Africa was going to have majority rule, too.

I feel good about that. My role was certainly a peripheral one, but it's one of the things I worked on that I feel turned out really well-so far, at least.

Since this is nearly the end of the interview, I suppose I can make a little philosophical departure here and reflect on my career choice when I entered the Foreign Service as an Africanist, full of optimism and idealism, thinking that I was going to be part of the "new" world and that Africa was going to avoid all of the mistakes that everybody else had made. Looking back over it, I consider it a striking display of naivete which, I have to say, was shared by many of my colleagues. I don't think that I was alone in this.

Q: There was an enormous amount of enthusiasm about Africa.

KULICK: Under the impact of the Civil Rights Movement [in the United States] and the idealism of the 1960's, Africa seemed to be a kind of "tabula rasa" [a place cleared of the mistakes of the past]. Here [we were] in the seventh decade of the 20th century, and [the African countries] were emerging into independence. World War II and everything connected with it were behind us. It was a new era, of "flower power" and who knows what else? The reality is that everybody makes his own mistakes. You have to crawl before you can walk. You aren't born a full-grown adult. Everybody else in the world has to go through the [process of growing up]. I don't mean that in any condescending kind of way. I don't mean to [compare Africans to infants], but [those countries] were in their infancy as national, sovereign states. They're still in their infancy, in many ways.

It's hard to see what 35 years of U. S. involvement in independent Africa have done for Africa. I don't mean that it's all our fault, by any stretch of the imagination. Neither does it seem to me that what we have been able to do there, either, in terms of diplomatic contact or military or economic assistance, has helped much. Africa is a bloody mess, with three or four striking exceptions. Botswana is one of them and Namibia also-ironically in the part of the continent that seemed the most troubled in 1960-and which took the longest time to make the transition. [Those two countries] may, in fact, have been blessed by that [extended period of time] because they, unlike the [countries which] became independent in the 1960's, seem to have been able to learn from their mistakes. They also built up a kind of economic infrastructure during this extended, colonial phase which those [countries] which gained independence in the 1960's did not enjoy.

I got out of Africa pretty much after my experience in the "Horn of Africa" and moved to the Middle East, because I had the feeling already by the 1970's that Africa [was facing growing problems]. I spent five, wonderful years in Somalia and Ethiopia and really enjoyed [the experience]. However, within six months of my leaving Somalia, they went through a coup d'etat, and the only "working" democracy in Africa was finished. Two years after I left Ethiopia, [Emperor] Haile Selassie fell, and the country was taken over by a communist or virtually communist military dictatorship. It then sank into 17 years of civil war and destruction.

It's hard not to feel some disillusionment. I still have colleagues in the Foreign Service who spent a full career in Africa and really feel gratified [by the experience]. I didn't share that feeling. Now I think that we're looking at real catastrophe in Africa. I would like to mention an article by Robert Kaplan in the "Atlantic," which many people have read but which you [say that you] haven't read yet. I commend it to you. I have a copy of [the article] here. The article predicts more or less complete anarchy and national disintegration of much of the African continent, pointing out that in large parts of West Africa-in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and elsewhere-this process is already well under way. Kaplan says that he thinks that [the same process] is going to extend to the Middle East, too. So I don't get a "pass" because I spent the second half of my career working on the Middle East.

Q: It looks as if the "glue" that held things together-the East-West conflict-kept things frozen on both sides.

KULICK: It's not at all clear that Africa in the long run was the beneficiary of the attention of the East and the West generated by the Cold War. Basically, I think that I agree with those Africans who say that they were essentially "used" as pawns. When the Cold War was over, the pawns were simply discarded.

Q: Well, [the Cold War] held things together. Whether that's a good thing or not is another...

KULICK: That is not to say that the Africans themselves did not try to exploit this artificial kind of attention. The Somalis were the worst [example of this], and they're now suffering the consequences. However, all over Africa [the various countries] played East against West for all they were worth. And what they were worth, in most cases, was a bunch of useless weapons that are now piles of rust. They are worse off-far worse off, economically-than they were 25 years ago.

Q: You retired after [your assignment to the Office of Southern African Affairs]? When did you retire?

KULICK: I retired in September, 1989-mandatory retirement, I'm not ashamed to say. I wasn't happy about it. I would have liked to stay, but not everybody can be a general. I haven't regretted...

Q: You've been in some very interesting places.

KULICK: If anyone has the leisure to listen to this entire interview, he or she will hear that I never regretted anything that I did in the Foreign Service, with the possible exception of the two years I spent as a speech writer. With that exception I never had a job that I didn't thoroughly enjoy. There aren't that many people who can look back on a 23-year career and say that, whatever their field.

Q: Whatever their field. You're absolutely right.

KULICK: So I feel very privileged and pleased at what I did in the Foreign Service. I still think that it's a great profession, although I don't think that it's what it used to be, sociologically, if nothing else. It's a very different kind of institution now with the "turning inward" phase we are entering into [as a nation]-neo-isolationism. I think that the Foreign Service will have less attraction for lots of people. Certainly, it's not getting the kind of support in terms of resources that it desperately needs from the national pie. And that situation is only going to get worse. I look back on those years [in the Foreign Service] with great satisfaction.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

KULICK: Thank you.

End of interview

